

GRAMOPHONE

The world's best classical music reviews

Est 1923 · February 2011

LISZT

*How he changed
the course of music*

**And how, 200 years on,
the 'superficial charlatan'
is still underestimated**

(A Liszt list)

He made audiences faint

**The most sculpted artist
of his century**

**Inspired Tchaikovsky,
Mahler and Strauss**

Read Jeremy Nicholas, page 34

Reviewed

Superb 'new' Joan Sutherland opera set

**One of La Stupenda's
greatest performances
emerges on disc**

*"Domingo
sings as Domingo...
This is a tribute to his
achievement"*

**Plácido Domingo as
Simon Boccanegra, page 95**

**+140 REVIEWS
INSIDE**

Not just The Planets

**How recording Holst's masterpiece
has inspired Sir Andrew Davis to
rediscover his other works**

Also Dvořák's Cello Concerto

**Can a 74-year-old
recording still be
the best?**



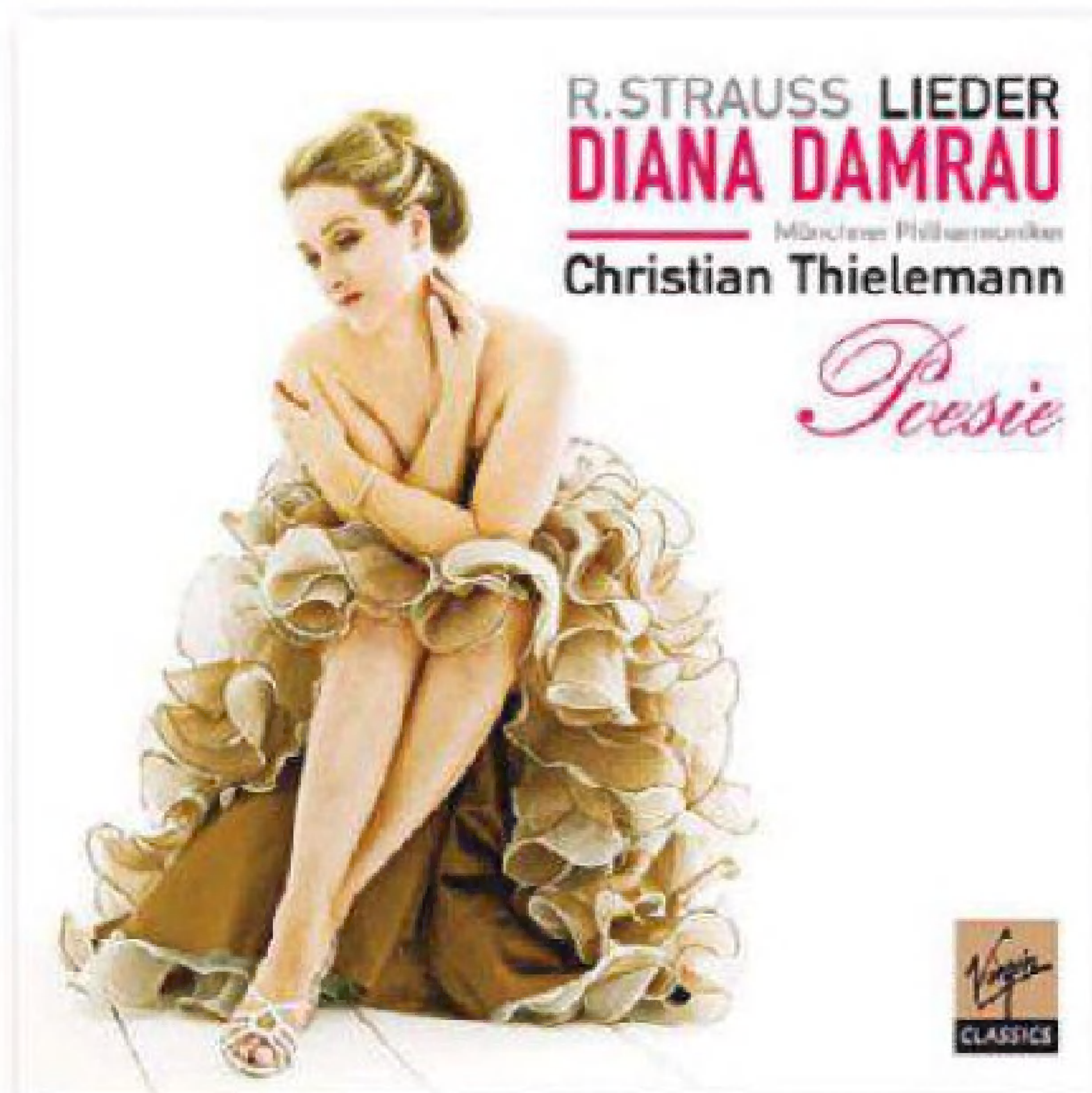
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January highlights

from EMI and Virgin Classics



Spotlight release



Poesie: Strauss Lieder Diana Damrau

Virgin Classics presents a treat for lovers of the soprano voice, Richard Strauss' songs and his magnificent writing for orchestra. Favourites such as *Ständchen*, *Wiegenlied*, *Allerseelen*, *Cäcilie* and *Zueignung* feature alongside more rarely heard numbers, and six tracks recorded under studio conditions complement sixteen songs captured in concert with the Münchner Philharmoniker and conductor Christian Thielemann.

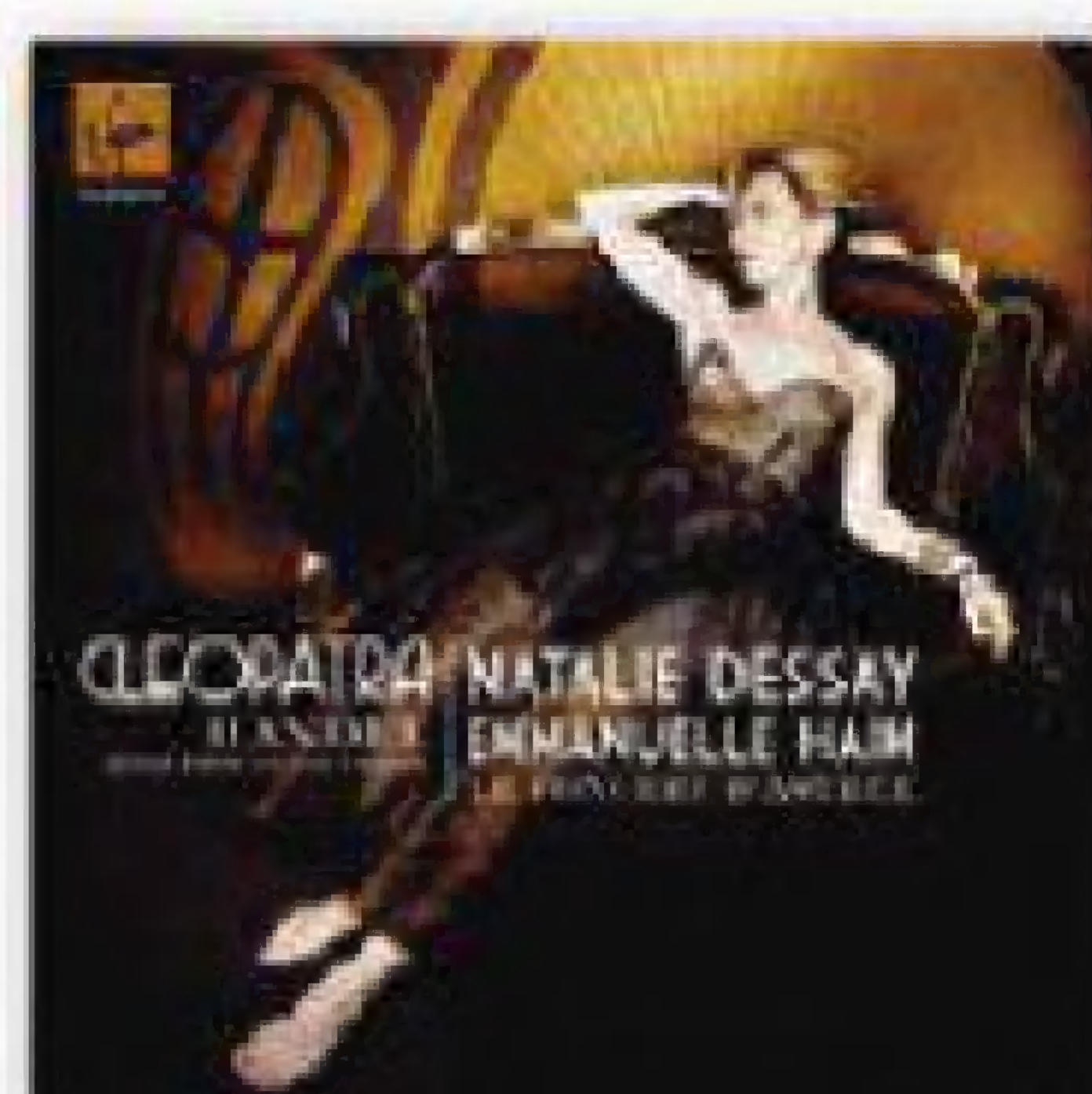
"Diana Damrau is the most thrilling high soprano of our day."

The Observer

"Probably the only soprano today who could alternate the parts of the Queen of the Night and Pamino to equal acclaim."

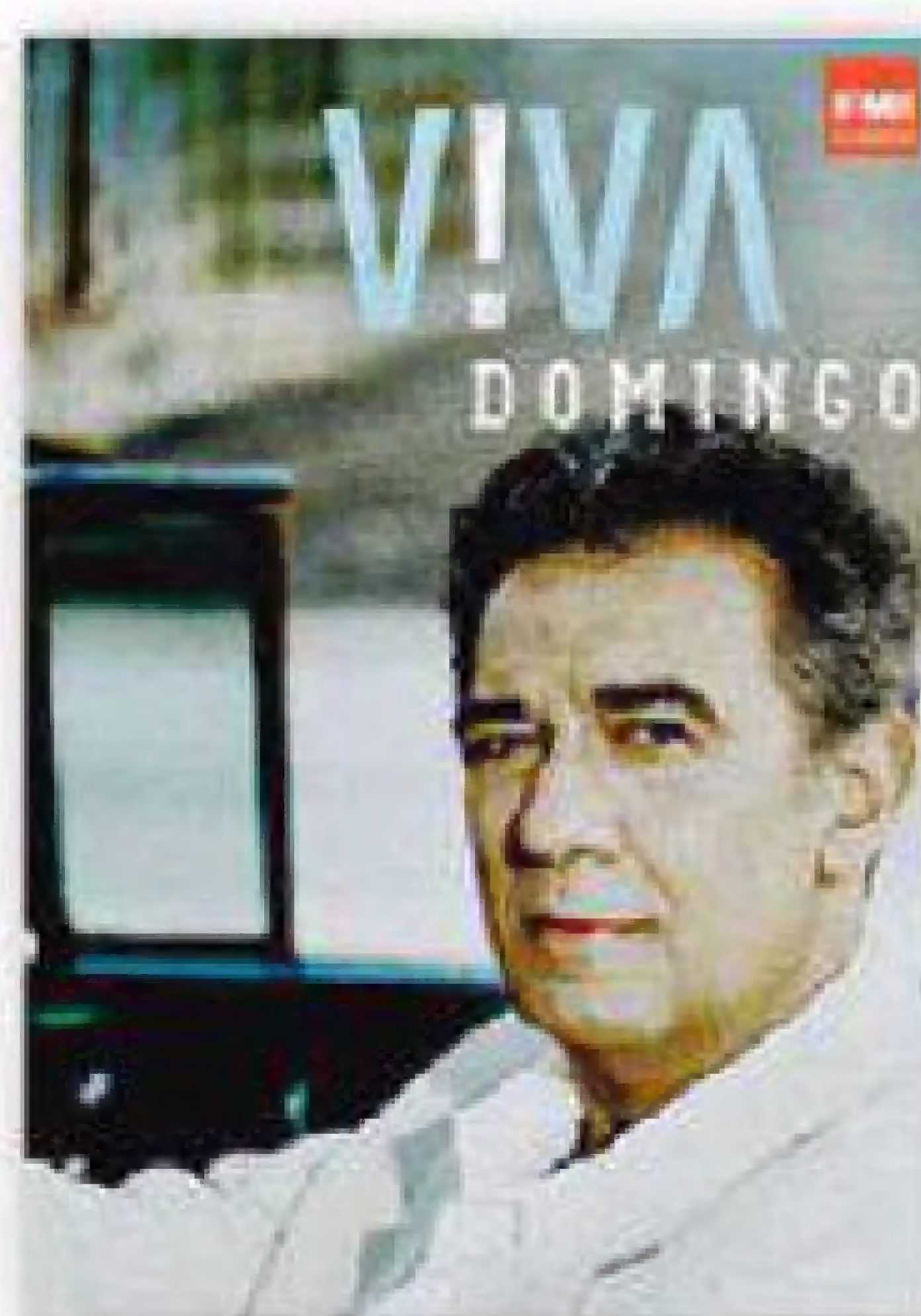
The Daily Telegraph

Also new this month



Handel: Cleopatra Arias Natalie Dessay

Anticipating her role debut as Cleopatra in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* at the Paris Opéra in early 2011, Dessay performs a selection of the Egyptian Queen's arias with the period-instrument orchestra Le Concert d'Astrée under Emmanuelle Haïm.

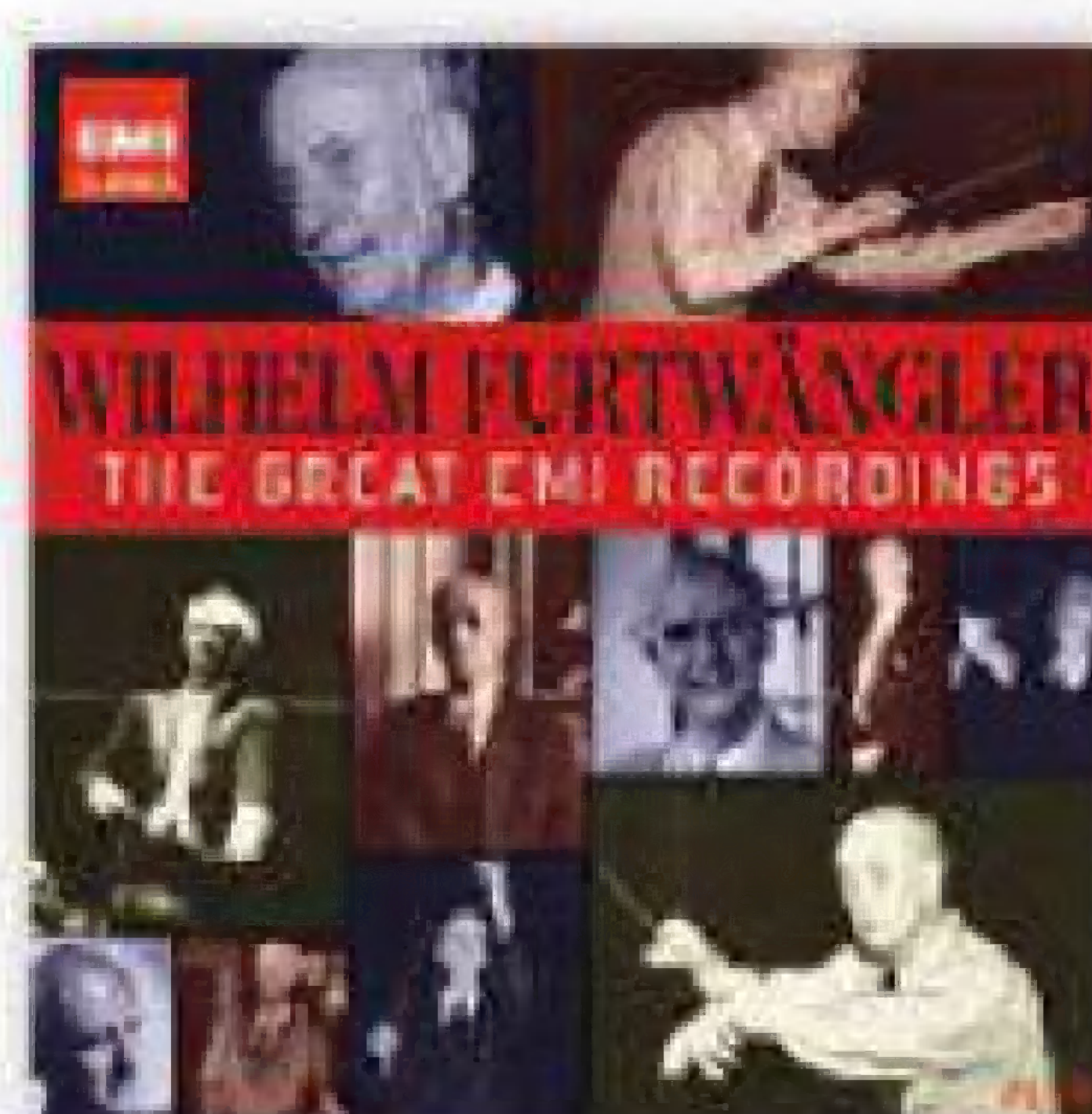


Viva Domingo! Plácido Domingo

EMI Classics celebrates Domingo Year - 70th birthday, 50 years on the stage, 20th anniversary of his Covent Garden debut - with a 4CD portrait, packaged in a luxurious, lavishly illustrated 58-page full-colour book. Also released is a 2CD set *The Very Best of Plácido Domingo*.

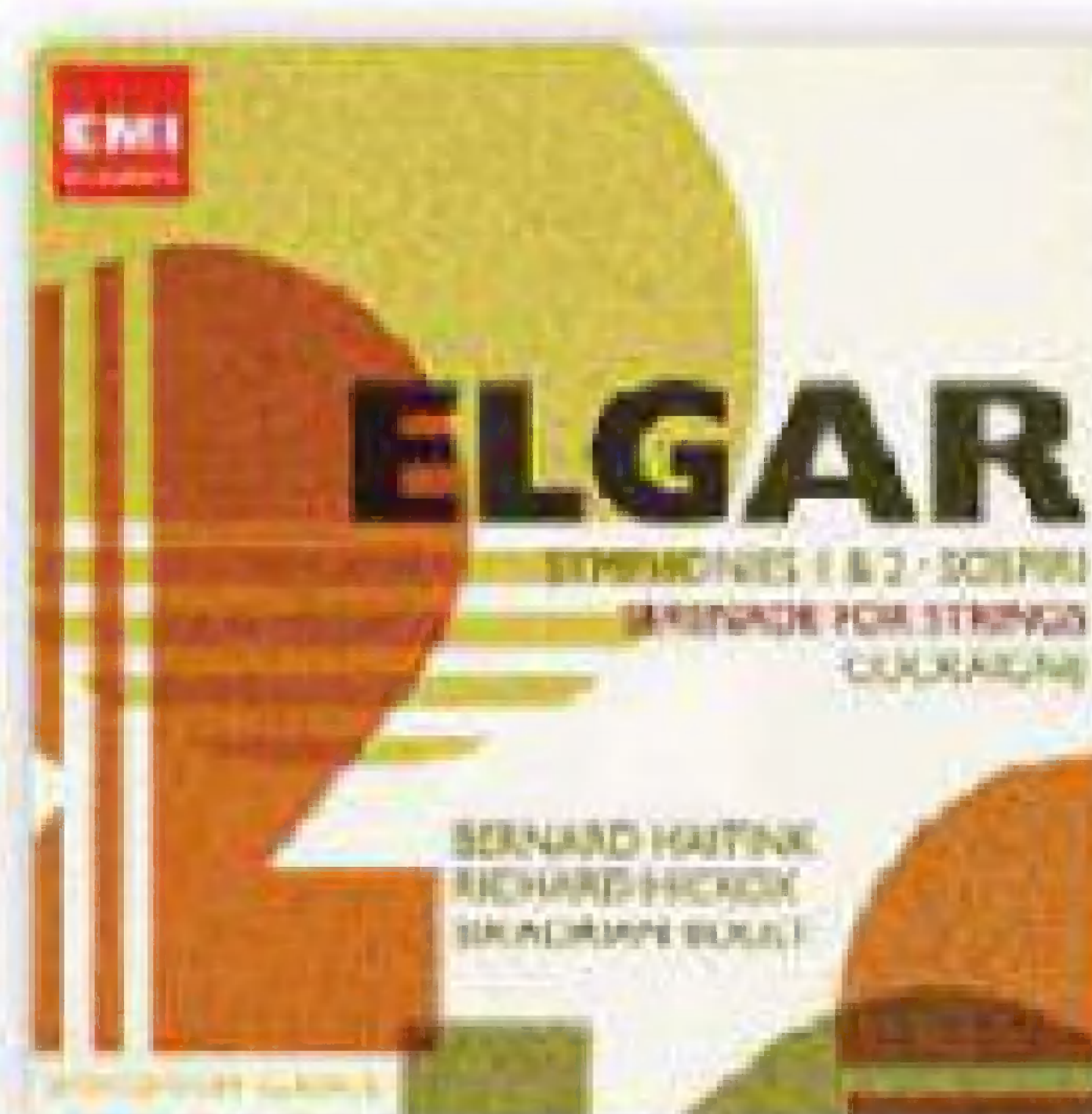
"Above all else there's Domingo: courageous, still eloquent, an artist in a million."

The Times



The Great EMI Recordings Wilhelm Furtwängler

EMI Classics celebrates the 125th birthday of the great conductor with three releases - a 20CD box which comprises a mix of live and studio recordings, a 3CD set *The Legend* and a repackaging of his historic recording of Wagner's great opera *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.



20th Century Classics Elgar

The popular series presents ten new titles covering the music of Stravinsky, Tchaikovsky, Sibelius, Scriabin, Satie, Prokofiev, Elgar, Debussy, Lutoslawski and Berg, each presented as a 2CD set.



Essential Series Tchaikovsky

Five new titles - Puccini, Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky, Violin and Vivaldi - join this popular series of 2-CD budget price sets featuring best-loved works drawn from the EMI Classics and Virgin Classics catalogues, performed by the world's leading artists.

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GRAMOPHONE

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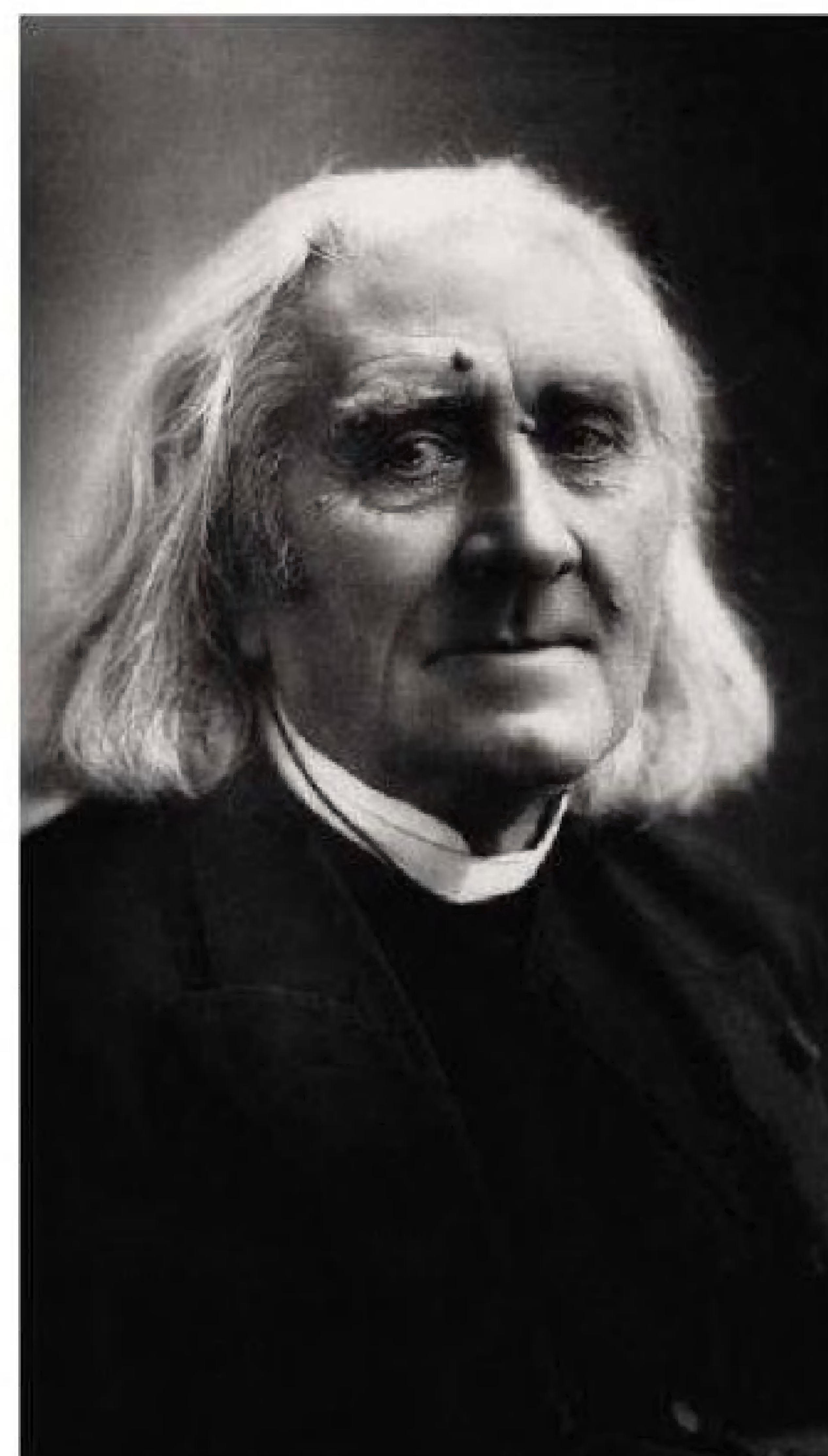
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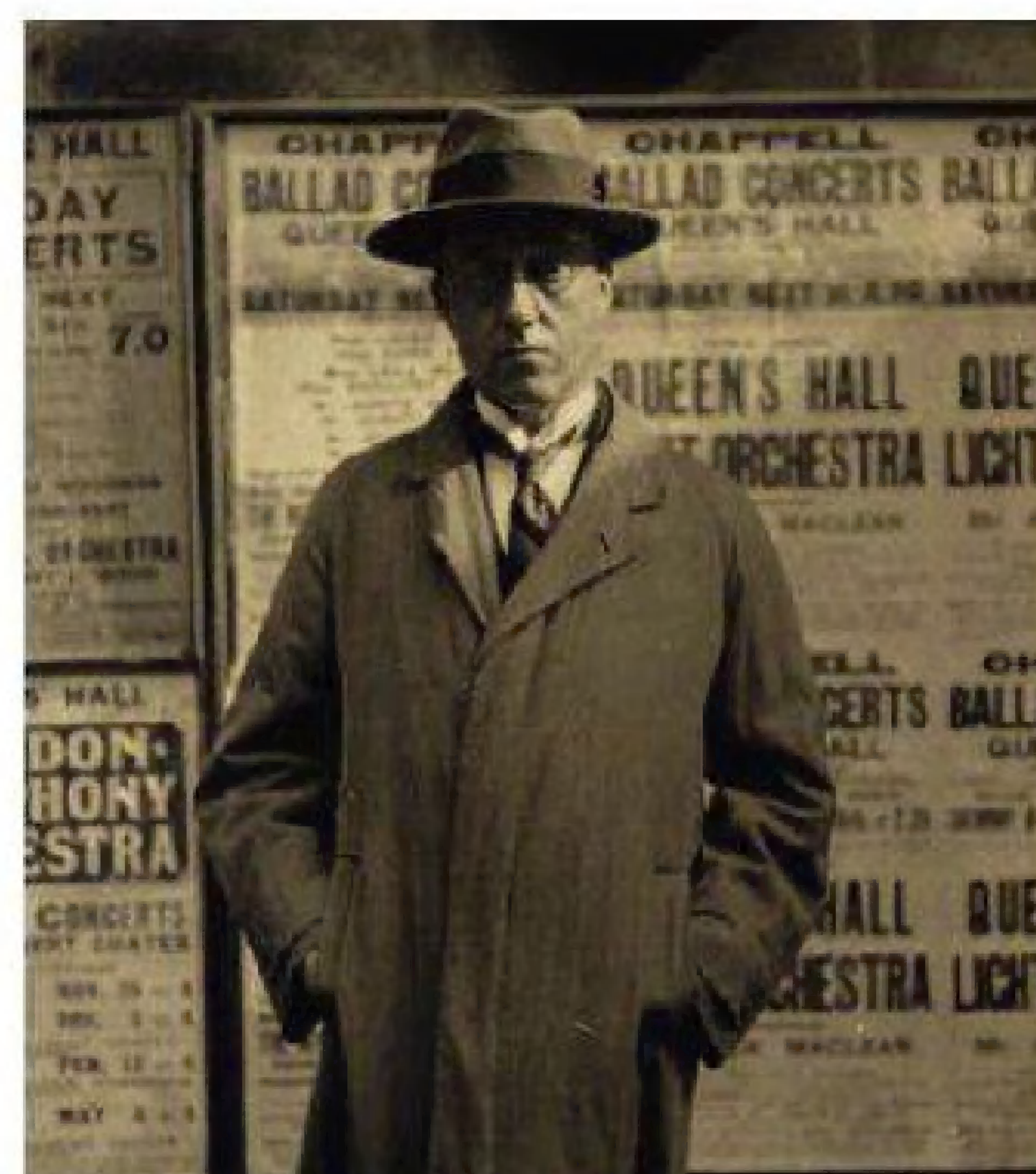
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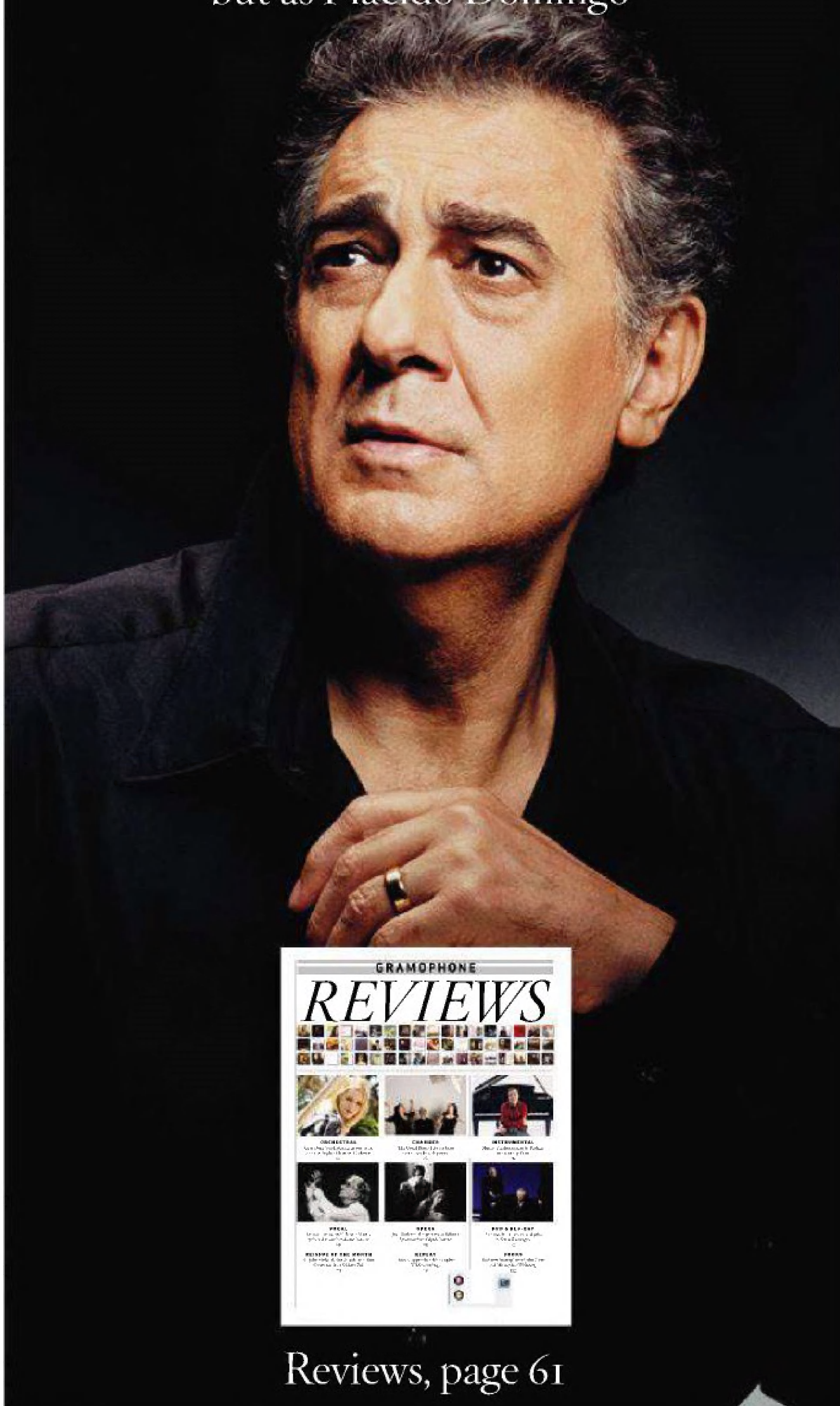
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THE SPECIALIST CLASSICAL CHART

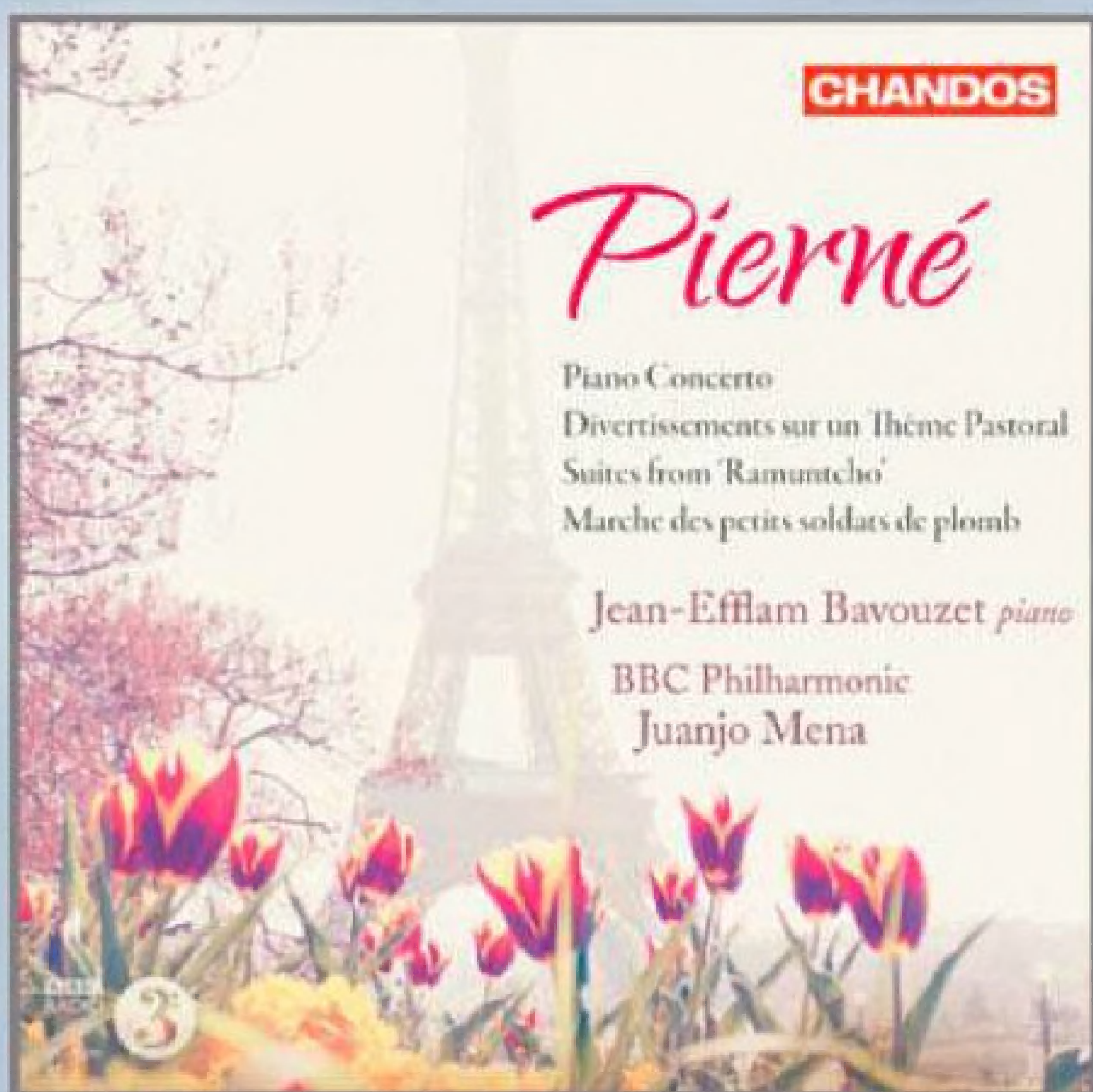
Read reviews alongside the entries in our classical music chart

‘Domingo does not sing Simon Boccanegra as a tenor, or as a baritone, but as Plácido Domingo’



Reviews, page 61

PHOTOGRAPHY: SHEILA ROCK



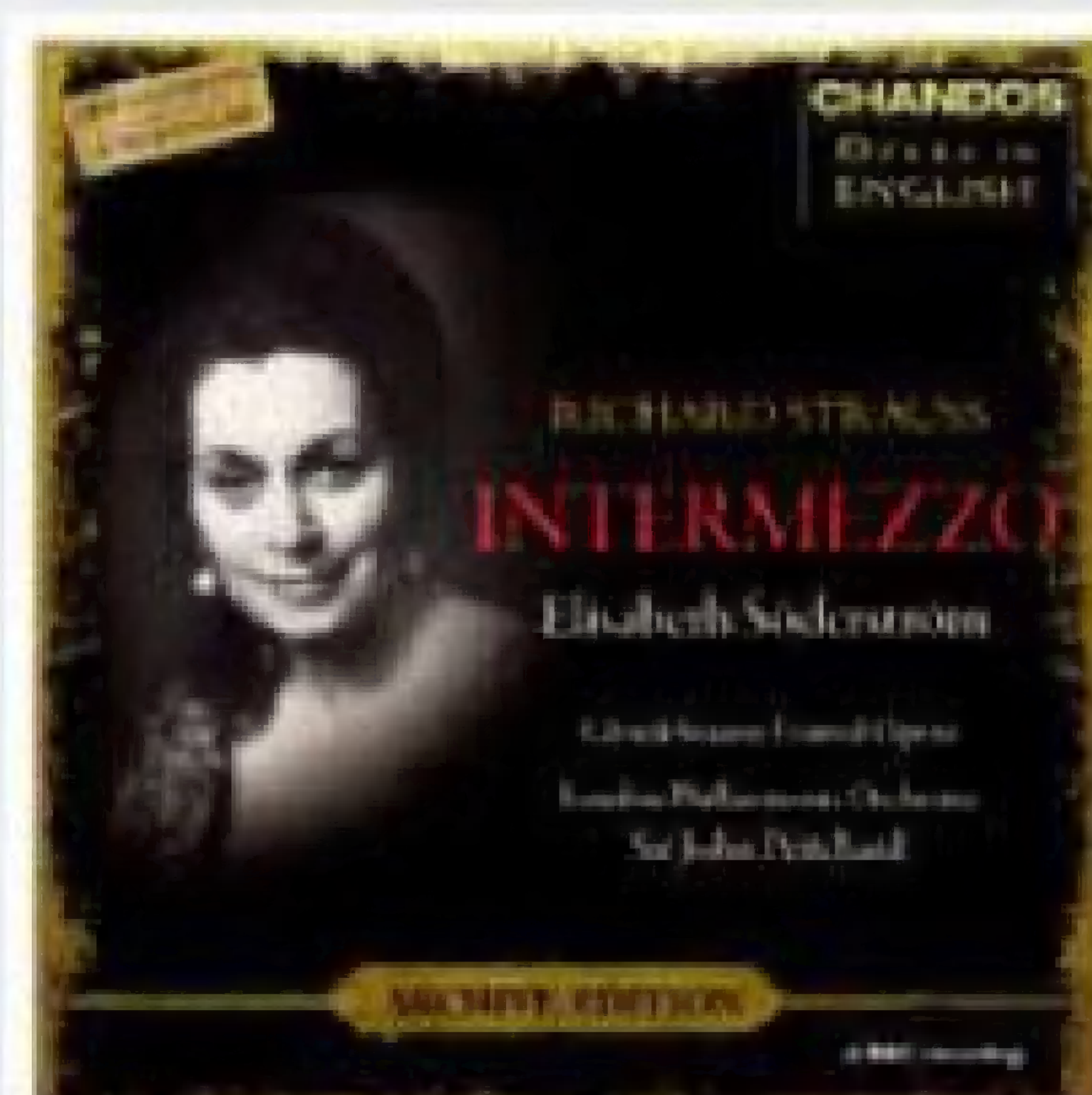
Disc of the Month

Pierné

This is Jean-Efflam Bavouzet's third recording for Chandos as a concerto soloist, and follows the highly acclaimed interpretations of the Bartók and Ravel piano concertos released in 2010. Accompanied by the BBC Philharmonic under Juanjo Mena, the virtuoso pianist here performs the rare, but highly appealing Piano Concerto by Gabriel Pierné; the disc also features the delightful *Marche des petits soldats de plomb* and suites from the music to *Ramuntcho*.

CHAN 10633

CHANDOS New Releases



Strauss's Intermezzo

Elisabeth Söderström (1927 – 2009) stars in this live BBC broadcast recording of Strauss's comic and pioneering opera *Intermezzo*, recorded at Glyndebourne in 1974 and here released on CD for the first time. The 2-disc set forms part of Chandos' Opera in English archive series and is available at mid price.

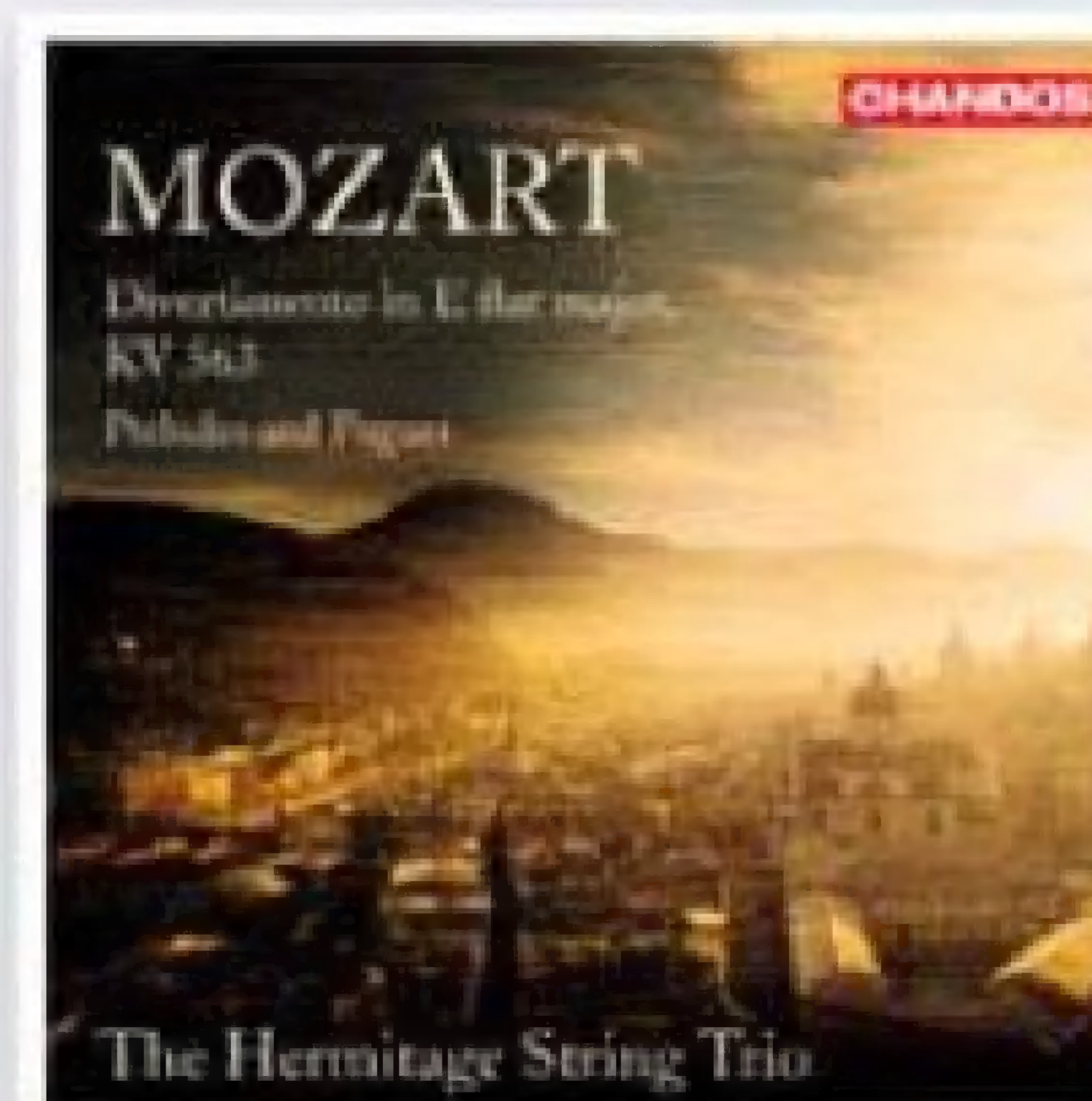
CHAN 3174(2)



Musica Italiana

Under Gianandrea Noseda, the BBC Philharmonic's charming series devoted to Italian music continues with a selection of highly atmospheric preludes and interludes from Italian operas of the 19th and 20th centuries. *Classic FM* wrote of CHAN 10511 (works by Wolf-Ferrari): 'Three cheers to Noseda who inspires the BBC Philharmonic to virtuoso heights in this selection of orchestral opera highlights.'

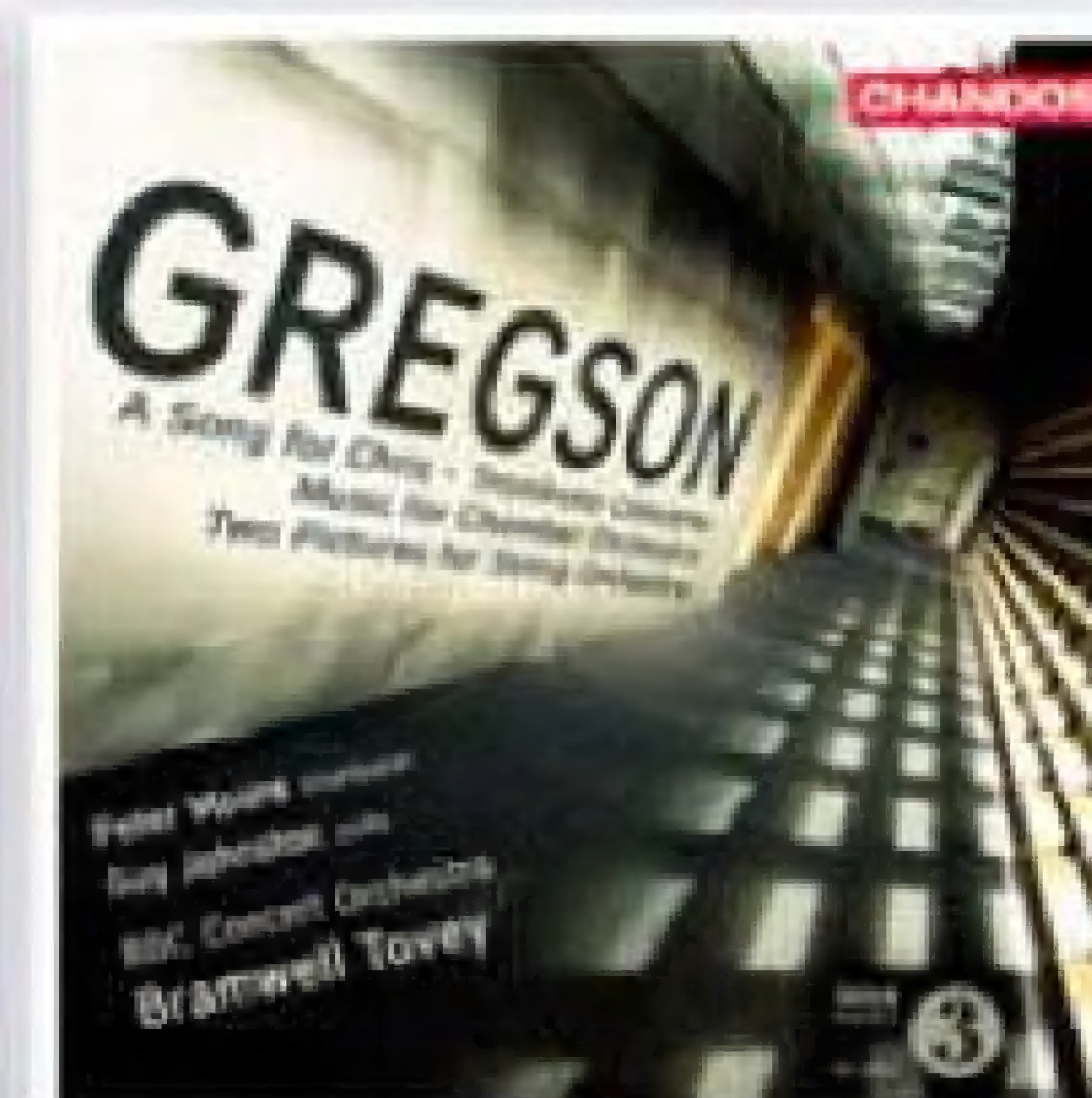
CHAN 10634



Mozart

The Hermitage String Trio returns in a programme of lesser-known but noteworthy works for string trio by Mozart: the Divertimento, KV 563 and two of the Preludes and Fugues, KV 404a (after Bach). 'True brilliance!' noted *The Strad* of a recent performance by the Trio, adding, 'This ensemble will do much to put more string trio repertoire on the musical map'.

CHAN 10635



Gregson

We present Vol. 3 in a series of Gregson's concertos, described as 'vital, attractive and immensely likable music' by the *IRR*. The works are performed by the BBC Concert Orchestra under Bramwell Tovey with soloists Peter Moore (BBC Young Musician of the Year, 2008) in the Trombone Concerto, and Guy Johnston in Gregson's most recent work, the cello concerto *A Song for Chris*.

CHAN 10627



Musical London, c. 1700

This recording explores the distinctive blend of English and Italian styles in music composed in London between the eras of Purcell and Handel. The repertoire includes works by Croft, Weldon, Courteville, Matteis, Pepusch, Draghi, and Haym, here performed by Peter Holman and The Parley of Instruments with the soprano soloist Philippa Hyde.

CHAN 0776

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DECCA

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O SOLITUDE - SONGS AND ARIAS BY HENRY PURCELL

Andreas Scholl
Accademia Bizantina

For the first time on record,
star countertenor Andreas
Scholl sings musical

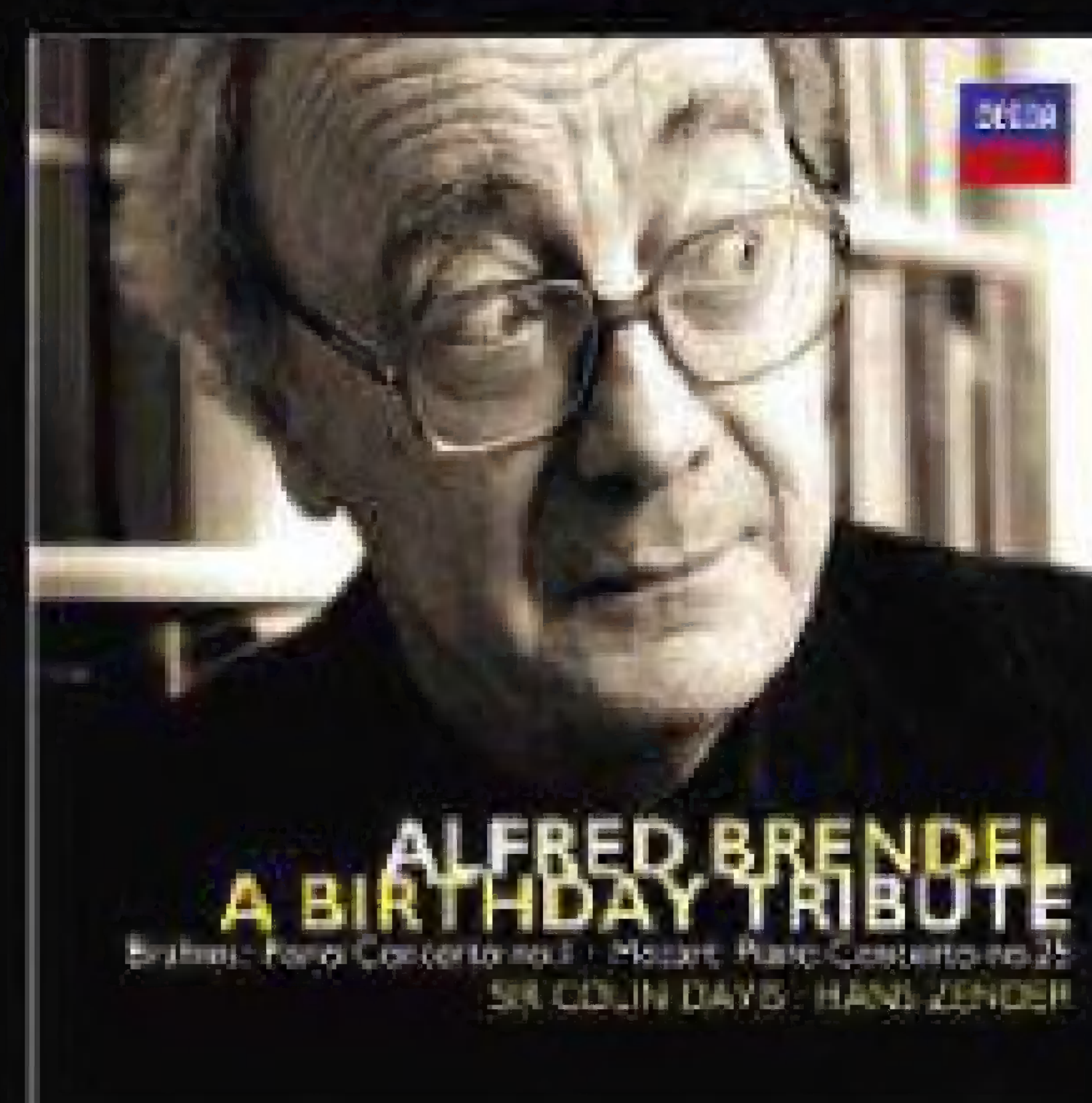
treasures by the great Baroque composer Henry Purcell, including duets with French countertenor Christophe Dumaux; the Cold Song from King Arthur and the poignant lament from Dido and Aeneas "When I am laid in earth".

"There are more excellent countertenors before the public today more than ever before, but one of them stands out above all others...Andreas Scholl" - Fanfare

www.deccaclassics.com/scholl-purcell

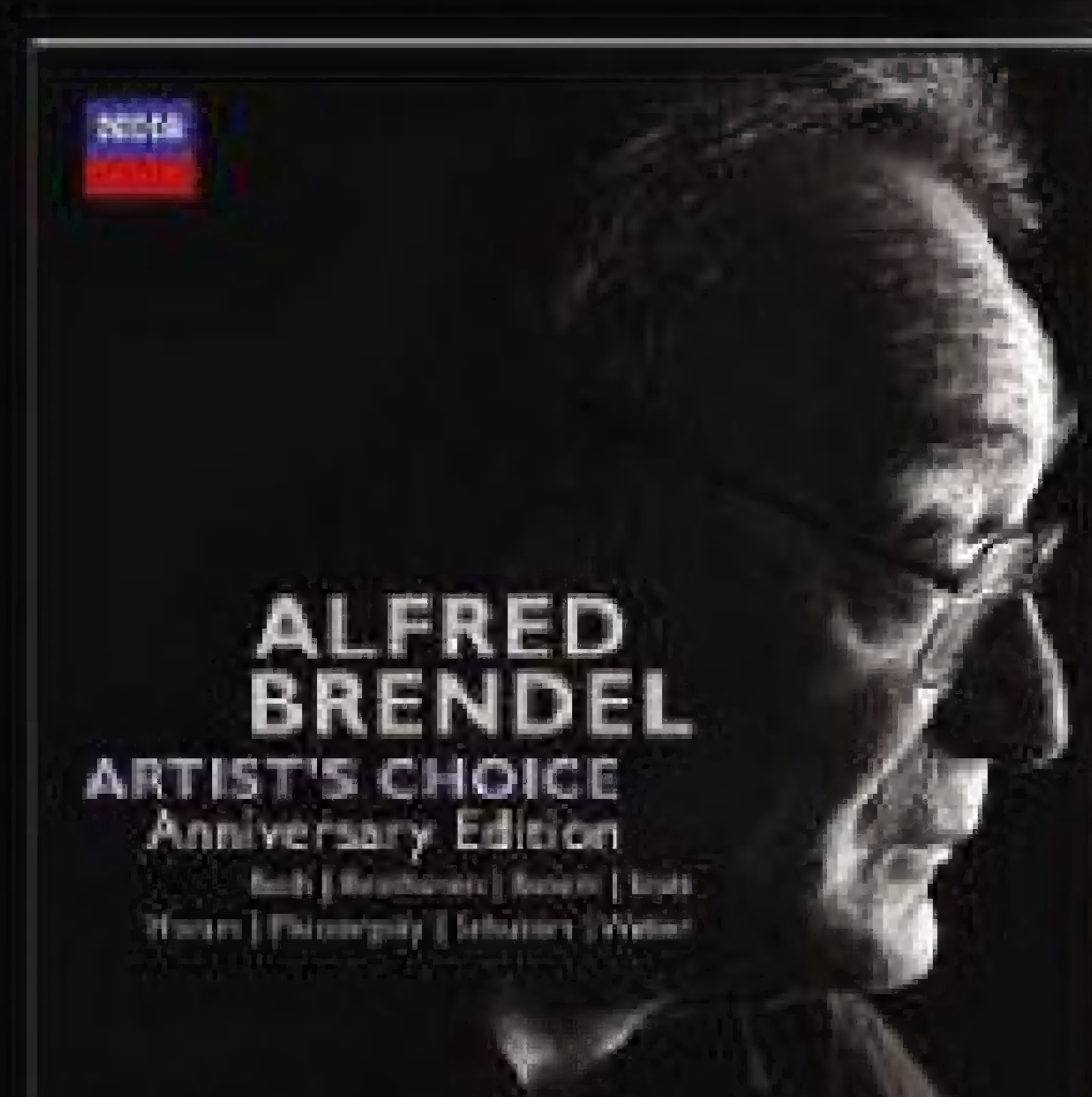


As Alfred Brendel celebrates his 80th birthday in January 2011, Decca marks this momentous occasion with four major releases.



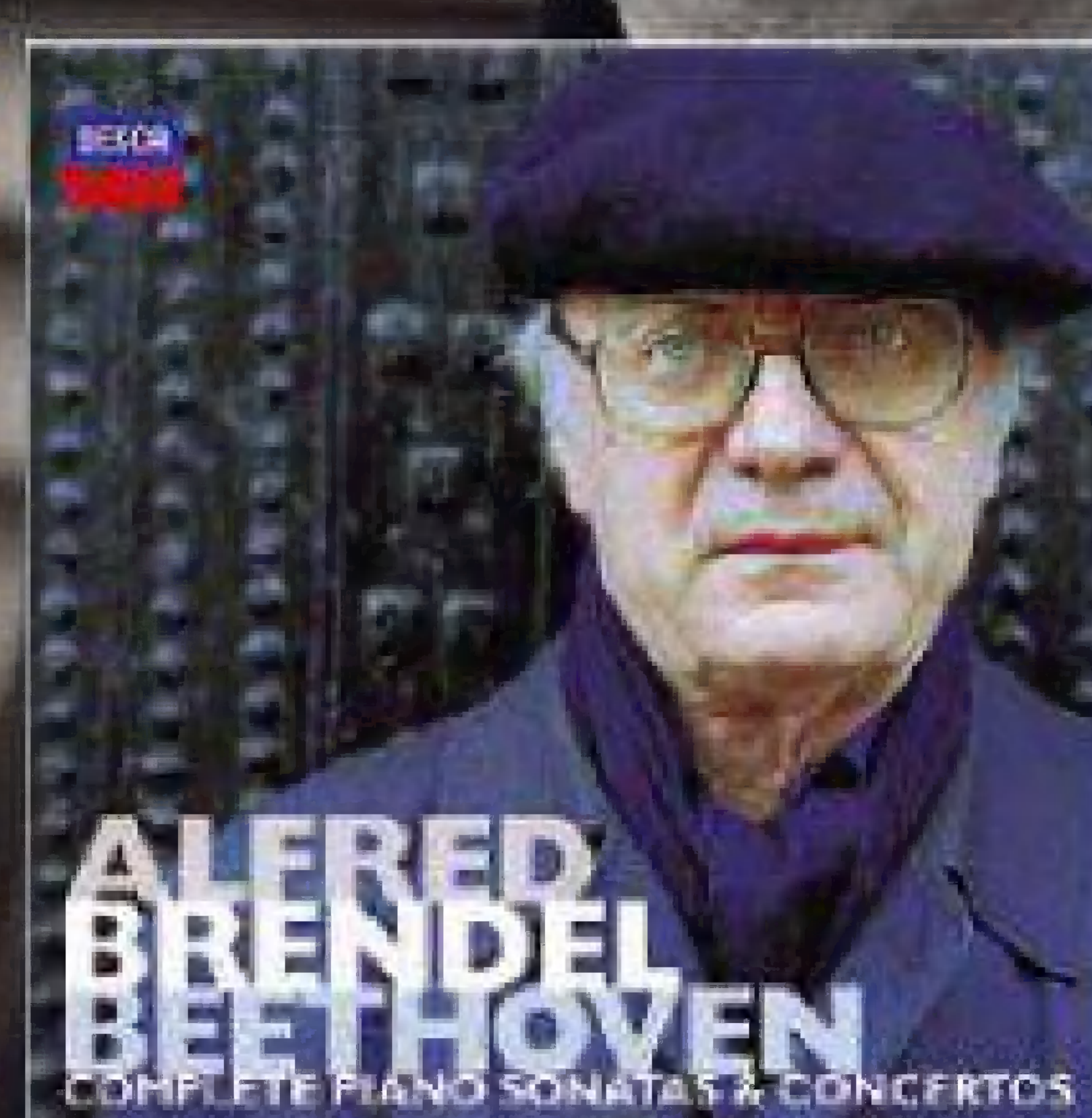
A BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE

Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 1
*Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 25, K503**
Beethoven: Piano Sonata No. 31, op. 110
Schubert: Impromptu in F minor, D935 no. 1
*SOBR / Davis - SWR-SO / Zender** 2 CDs 478 2604
This 2-CD set presents four of Alfred Brendel's favourite, unreleased concert recordings. *"I am delighted that these live performances have finally become available. With all suitable reservations, they seem to me to realise my idea of these works more fully than others."* Alfred Brendel



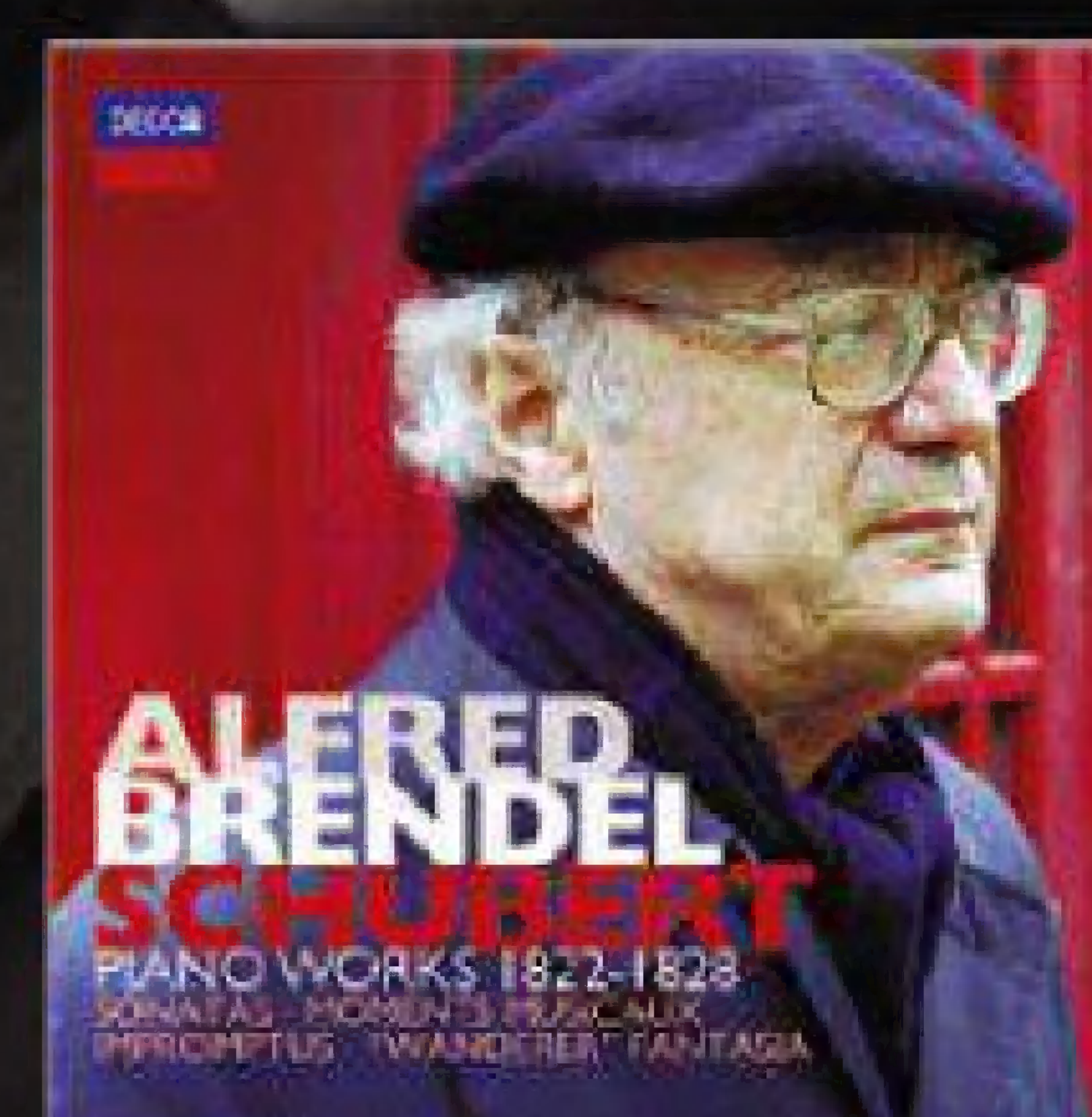
ARTIST'S CHOICE ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Bach / Beethoven / Busoni / Liszt / Mozart / Mussorgsky / Schubert / Weber 3 CDs 478 2638
Alfred Brendel's own selection from his many recordings, including Bach's Italian Concerto, Mussorgsky's 'Pictures', and Liszt's 'Légendes'. This beautifully packaged 3-CD hardcover book comes with Brendel's own, personal reminiscences, an essay on the repertory by Misha Donat and a complete discography of Brendel's recordings from Philips and Decca, celebrating what Alfred Brendel himself describes as "a long and happy association".



BEETHOVEN

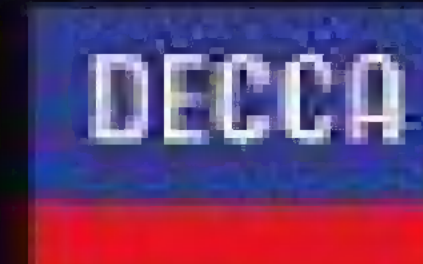
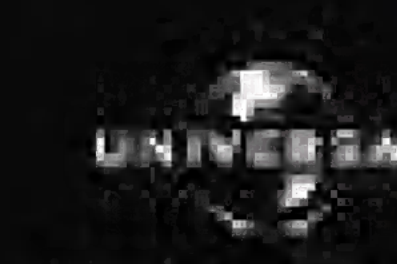
Complete Beethoven Sonatas & Concertos 12 CDs 478 2607
"A feast of Beethoven playing" - Gramophone
Available for the first time as a specially priced 12-CD box set, Alfred Brendel's recordings of all thirty-two Beethoven piano sonatas and the five concertos have long been admired as benchmark performances. *"Beethoven interpretation as vivid and apparently effortless as Brendel's is to be prized"* - Gramophone



SCHUBERT

Schubert Piano Works 1822-1828
Sonatas - Moments musicaux - Impromptus
"Wanderer" Fantasia 7 CDs 478 2622
The piano music of Schubert has been central to Alfred Brendel's acclaimed career. This specially priced 7-CD box set brings together his lauded recordings of music composed in the final years of Schubert's tragically short life - including sonatas, impromptus and the "Wanderer" Fantasia.

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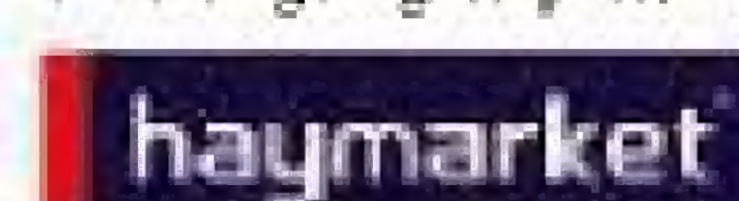
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Kevin Costello

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Our Contributors



One of **JEREMY NICHOLAS's** first loves is the virtuoso piano music of the 19th century, so he was just the person to write this month's cover story on the greatest pianist-composer of them all, Franz Liszt.



ROB COWAN is *Gramophone's* contributing editor, a broadcaster on BBC Radio 3 and a repository of information on great recordings. This month he compares versions of Dvořák's ever-popular Cello Concerto.



As principal of the Royal Academy of Music, **JONATHAN FREEMAN-ATTWOOD** is well placed to share his observations about the junior departments of the UK's music colleges.

Our Reviewers

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EDITORIAL

GRAMOPHONE

Founded in 1923 by Sir Compton Mackenzie and Christopher Stone as 'an organ of candid opinion for the numerous possessors of gramophones'

Remembering the 'great' in composers



So 2011 is Liszt year. Does this sound less evocative than Handel year, Chopin year or Mahler year (not forgetting of course that this is our second consecutive Mahler year, 2010 marking the 150th anniversary of his birth, this year the centenary of his death)? It shouldn't, yet Liszt has been, at worst, maligned as an empty showman and, more often, regarded with indifference. "Yes," we all say, "we know he's a great composer, but he's not really one of the titans, is he?" Those in the know, however, many of them musicians and composers, are aware just how inspirational a figure he is. A brilliant teacher, dazzling pianist, a composer who rewrote the rulebook and showed those who came after him new ways to go, this was no also-ran.

In this issue, Liszt devotee Jeremy Nicholas, who wrote a facinating cover story about Chopin last year, shows precisely why Liszt deserves to be spoken of in the same breath as the three composers I mentioned at the top and how his range was far wider than many now realise. As

'Liszt and Holst share some issues. The Planets aside, Holst suffers from "one-hit wonder" syndrome'

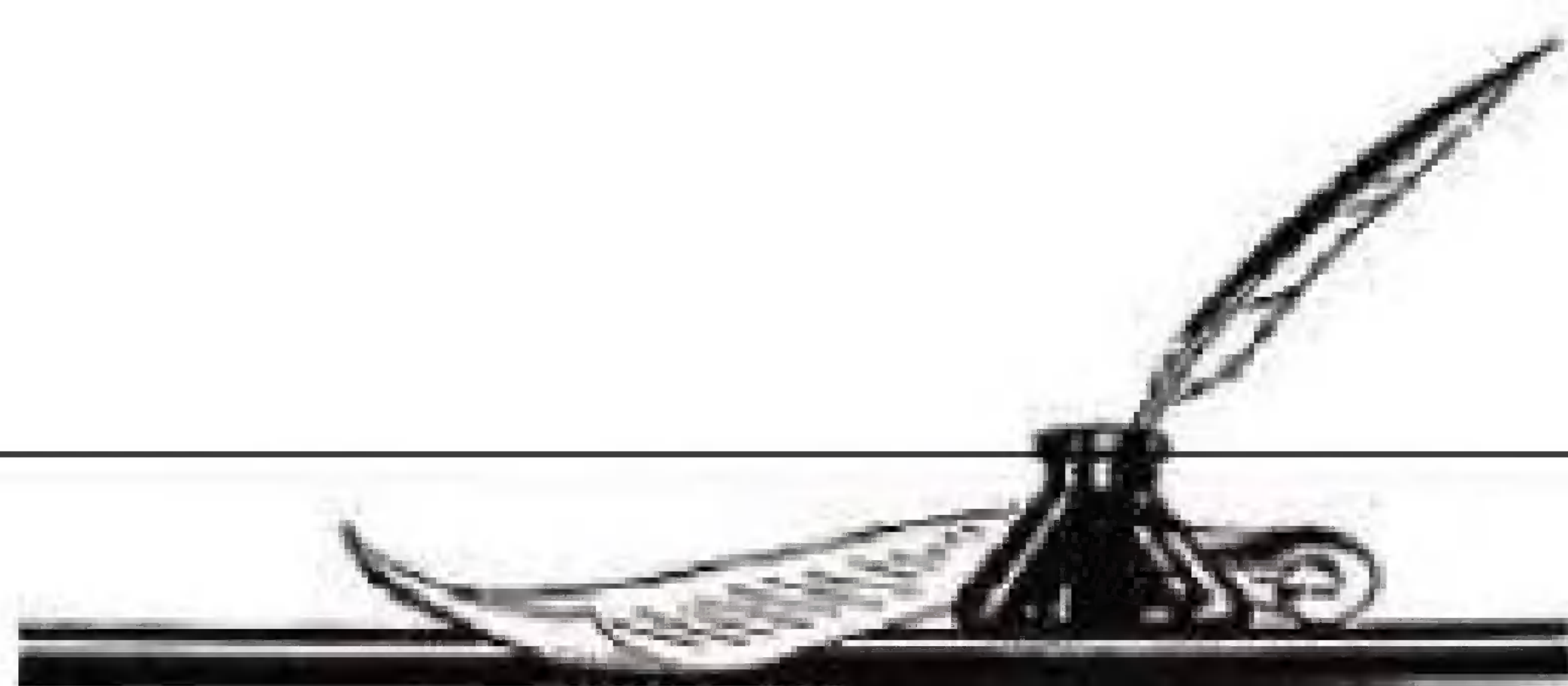
we go to press, incidentally, some exciting Liszt news from Hyperion which didn't make our cover story. In February the label is to issue the complete piano music (only 99 CDs), played by that indefatigable Liszt specialist Leslie Howard, while Marc-André Hamelin turns to the composer with a new album for May.

Switching composers, Sir Andrew Davis has just recorded Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. In a way, Liszt and Holst share some issues. No problem with *The Planets*' reputation; but, that fabulously successful suite aside, Holst suffers from "one-hit wonder" syndrome. In fact, Davis tells John von Rhein that plunging back into Holst's world has made him appreciate anew the inspiration suffusing so many more of his works.

So two composers reassessed, we plunge into a third with Rob Cowan's masterly traversal of Dvořák's Cello Concerto on record. The big question for fans will be, does the famous Pablo Casals version still top the list? Liszt, Holst, Dvořák: not a bad way to start 2011.

James





Notes & Letters

Praise for Ernst • Beecham's *Zauberflöte* provokes debate • Mahler's Tenth divides opinion

Hugh the droner

I can hear where columnist Philip Kennicott is coming from when he disparages *Hugh the Drover* (Awards, page 26). Much as I love the music of Vaughan Williams, I find that once or twice a decade is enough *Hugh* for me.

On the subject, I have only had one idea for a cartoon in my life. The setting is a magnificent opera house. The stage is filled with rural scenery, a chorus, and several soloists, variously dressed as early 19th-century soldiers and peasants. In the pit the orchestra is busily playing away, while a stocky, bald man is flailing about on the podium, sweat shooting from his head in all directions. Above the stage a long banner reads, "*Hugh the Drover!* Held over for all eternity! Non-stop back-to-back performances!"

The cartoon's caption is: "Pierre Boulez in Hell."

Daniel Bryant

Victoria, BC, Canada

If any readers would like to create and submit such a cartoon, we will be happy to print the best in a future issue - Ed.

Earnest about Ernst

I've read Arnold Whittall with pleasure for many years, so I was disappointed he could hear



Ning Feng: a stalwart champion of Ernst

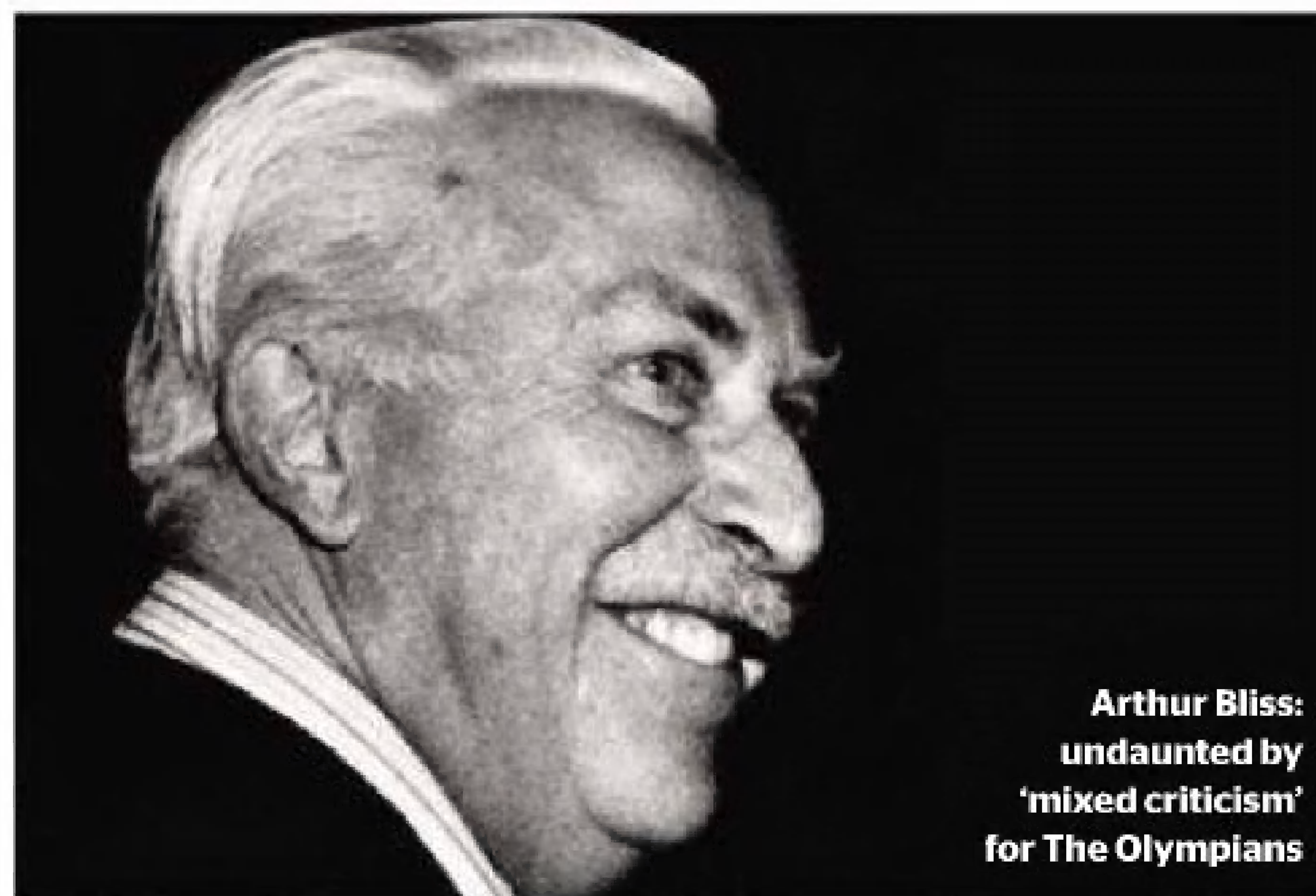
LETTER OF THE MONTH

Bring The Olympians to the Olympics!

With the year of the Olympics looming I wonder whether some enterprising record company might consider bringing out a recording of Sir Arthur Bliss's and JB Priestley's opera *The Olympians*?

When this three-act opera was staged at the Royal Opera House in 1949 in not very promising circumstances (the conductor and the producer, for example, finished up not speaking to each other) it was greeted by what the composer referred to, somewhat wryly one imagines, as "very mixed criticism". Whilst it would be foolish to make exaggerated claims for it, a recording of a shortened version performed at the Royal Festival Hall in 1972 suggests that it has some striking passages and would be well worth reviving. It would also be a reminder of Priestley's enormous versatility and skill as a writer. Indeed, Sir Arthur, early on in their collaboration, expressed a warm appreciation of his abilities: "He is a quick thinker, prolific of ideas, and with an enviable experience of the theatre."

Michael Nelson, via email



Arthur Bliss: undaunted by 'mixed criticism' for *The Olympians*

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classical music sites on the internet. The letter of the month receives £50 of Presto Classical gift vouchers. Please send letters for publication in the March issue by January 11

**PRESTO
CLASSICAL**

nothing of value in two solo pieces by HW Ernst mentioned in his review of Ning Feng's new album (November, page 83). Whittall tells us that Ernst "remind[s] us of the worst excesses of the post-Paganini cult"; that Ernst's sixth

Polyphonic Study is "10 minutes of indignities inflicted on 'The Last Rose of Summer'"; and that the transcription of Schubert's "Erlkönig" "reaches rock-bottom".

I wonder how many composer-virtuosi of other periods would

be swatted so blithely? To me, Ernst's set of variations on "The Last Rose of Summer" is a floating witchery of sound. By contrast, the "Erlkönig" is exciting, harsh and direct, although it, too, turns restriction into a creative virtue.

Can the Ernst who penned Whittall's "indignities" and "rock-bottom" transcription be the same composer whose *Otello Fantasy* influenced the last movement of Mendelssohn's E minor Violin Concerto? Whose *Carnival of Venice* inspired Gautier and Berlioz to poetic heights, and turned Dostoyevsky into a novelist? People who have already heard what Whittall missed will be pleased to know that all of Ernst's music for violin and piano, played by Sherban Lupu and Ian Hobson, is being made available for the first time by Toccata Classics.

MW Rowe, via email

False Legge legacy?

I write regarding The Trial feature about the Beecham *Die Zauberflöte* (December, page 30), which contains spurious information as to the background surrounding the recording of the work.

Firstly, the supposed "well-honed" Glyndebourne production of 1937 was definitely not of the highest standard. My father, the bass Norman Walker, who sang the Speaker and Second Armed Man in the performances, recalled most clearly the intonation of some soloists was far from reliable and German pronunciation very varied. Furthermore, as Mike Ashman rightly comments, there was a paucity of native German singers in that year's run.

The choice of conductor – Fritz Busch or Beecham – for the recording would not have been decided by Walter Legge alone – undoubtedly he would have suggested the latter. Legge was only 31 at the time and had



been a producer for less than six years. The final decision would have been made by a committee within the International Artists Department of which Rex Palmer was head. In addition, a contract with the Berlin Phil had been negotiated via The Gramophone Company's German branch Electrola in the summer of 1937. The then head of A&R in Germany was Walter Michael Berten who had supervised the earlier recording of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony with Furtwängler on October 7, 1937, when Fred Gaisberg went to Berlin to observe his handling of the sessions.

When it was decided the Beecham recording would be made in Berlin, Berten would have been responsible for making the necessary arrangements with the selected soloists. In 1965 I asked Robert Beckett (the resident engineer in Berlin during the 1930s and responsible for the technical side of *Die Zauberflöte*) for his memories of the sessions. He recalled that overall artistic control of the recording had been in the hands of Berten with Legge assisting. Moreover, he explained the choice of which "takes" were to be used for commercial release would not have been in the hands of Legge: these would have been assessed by the Record Testing Committee at Hayes once the necessary processing had been completed at the factory, and then a decision would have been made

on each one heard. These reports still survive in the EMI Music Trust Archives.

*Malcolm Walker
Harrow, Middlesex*

United in Mozart

I fear prosecutor Tully Potter's anti-Beecham feelings have run away with him. If, as he claims in *The Trial*, the opening chord of the *Zauberflöte* Overture in Beecham's complete recording of the opera with the Berlin Philharmonic is "not together", then I'm a Flying Dutchman. I have just tried out the chord on my wife, a singer who now teaches. "Together," she says.

John Lucas, via email

That Legge again...

Your honour, I object! While Mr Potter, has presented an admirable case for the prosecution of the alleged "iconic" 1937 recording of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, I contend that counsel for the defence has done nothing but respond to my learned colleague's accusations while submitting no relevant information on his own to uphold the alleged position of this recording. We must remember that this recording is one of an opera. Therefore, it is the voices rather than whether one prefers a cigar or cigarette that is relevant. Can Mr Ashman contend that Rosvaenge is any degree of a

Mozart singer? While I am a fan of Herr Rosvaenge, Mozart was not his *fach* as his vocal stiffness and discomfort here and in other recordings clearly shows. And is Madame Lemnitz a Pamina? Hardly! Walter Legge wanted complete control in all aspects and this is one instance where such arrogance fails to serve the case of the composer. I ask the judge to rule in favour of the prosecution, taking into account not just the conducting and omission of dialogue but the mismatching of singers, to be against the standing of said recording.

William Russell, via email

Fashionable Haydn

I firmly agree with Philip Kennicott's article (November, page 28) about people who "don't like Haydn." I commit heresy by saying that I think Haydn's final six symphonies are the equal of any of Mozart's, and I actually prefer the older composer's piano sonatas. Today it is "fashionable" to adore Mozart and deplore Haydn, just as it was "fashionable" several decades ago to love Bach and hate Handel. We also read that Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer got a great deal of flak for their insistence on bringing Bruckner's music out of oblivion, and in the period near the end of World War II, Sibelius was out of favour. I like CS Lewis's remark:

"Drat all fashions." Hopefully, these "fashionable" sorts will find out what they're missing.

Bruce A McDonald, via email

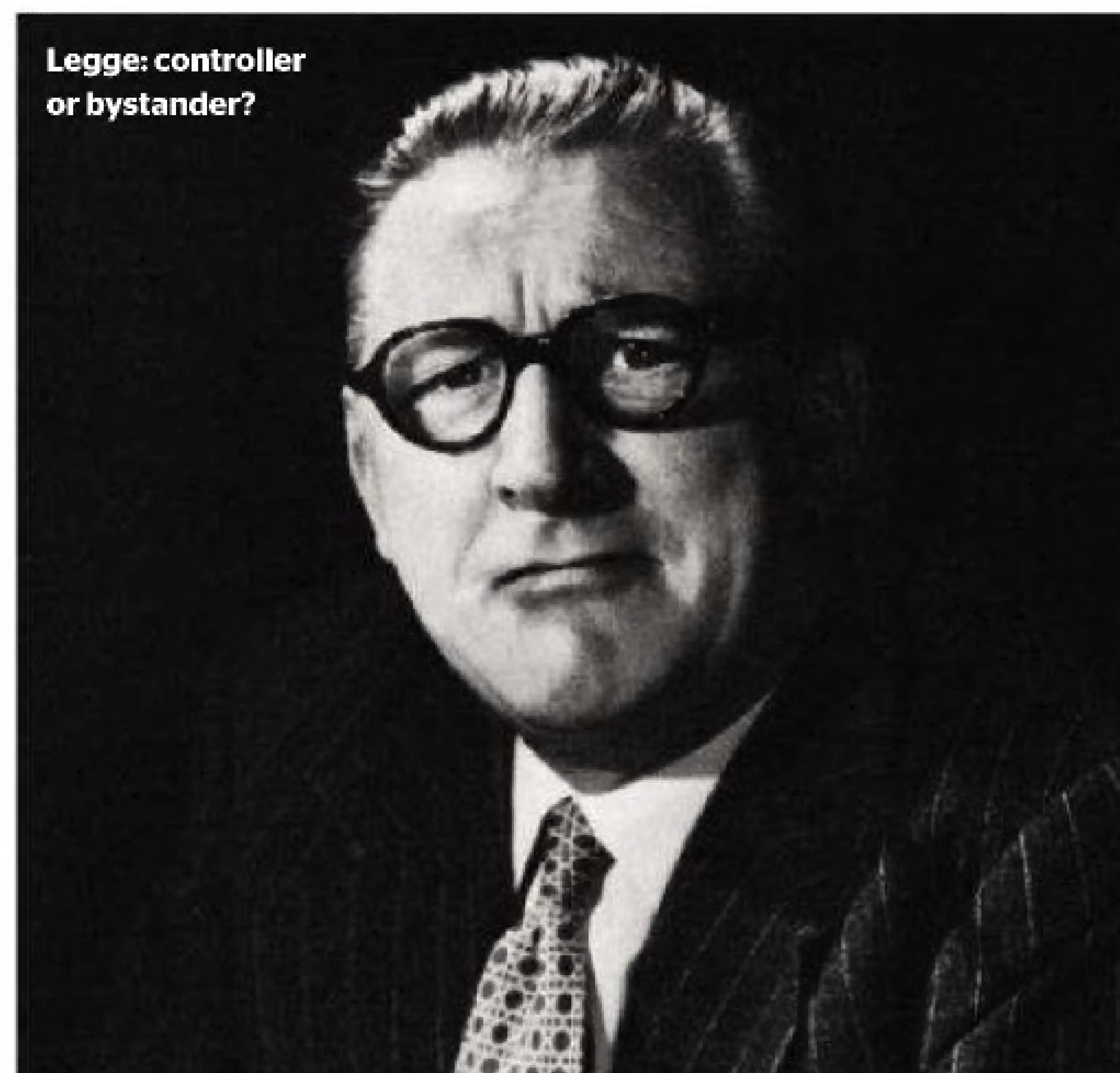
Weakest Mahler?

Prompted by David Gutman's review of the various recordings of Mahler's Tenth (Collection, December, page 62), I went back to my two recordings of the symphony (BPO/Rattle and BRSO/Chailly) to share in the enthusiasm for this piece. But, like many times in the past, this work leaves me cold, unlike every other of Mahler's symphonies (with varying degrees of satisfaction, of course). It did not take very long for me to confirm for the umpteenth time that however enthusiastic the critics are, at the end of the day it remains a creditworthy academic exercise.

*Michael G Colocassides,
Nicosia, Cyprus*

Lost Mahler Tenth

In his excellent review of all the recordings of Mahler's Tenth Symphony, David Gutman mentions the world premiere of the Deryck Cooke performing version which was given at the Proms on August 13, 1964, by the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Berthold Goldschmidt. Since 1969 I have possessed an excellent mono



recording of that performance which I transcribed from a BBC master tape obtained through a friend. As it's the only recording of a Mahler world premiere, it is a priceless document, and it has afforded me enormous pleasure and consolation down the years, especially as I attended the 1964 concert and can still remember it vividly. I particularly remember the audience laughter arising from surprise that was generated by the loud thwack on the bass drum that ended the fourth movement; and the way that response immediately died when another bang began the sombre opening of the finale. It was too subtle to be captured by the recording but it is the best advert I know for retaining the two strokes, rather than eliding them into one, as has been done by Simon Rattle and others.

About six years ago I wrote to the BBC to enquire if they might have a stereo recording of this broadcast in their archives. I was told that they now possessed no recording of it at all, for the original tapes had apparently been destroyed in the 1970s or thereabouts. At the request of the BBC archivist I then made a copy for the corporation, and subsequently I also made one for the music division of the British Library. Doubtless any of your readers who would like to hear it can do so in the latter institution in Euston. But I still live in hope that some enterprising CD company will make the recording commercially available.

Eric Shanes, Acton, London

Mahler's purgatory?

In his appraisal of recordings of Mahler's Tenth, David Gutman

suggests that, in the 1950s, F Charles Adler did not record the "Purgatorio" along with the *Adagio*. In fact, the "Purgatorio" is present on side three of my copy of Adler's SPA 30/31, along with the Finale of Bruckner's Third, Mahler's *Adagio* taking up side four.

Howard Jones, Derbyshire

Bravo Bournemouth

David Gutman's survey was (as expected) wide-ranging and scholarly. However it occurs to me to ask if I am alone in thinking that Sir Simon Rattle's first recording with the Bournemouth SO is finer than his later, award-winning Berlin PO offering which DG identified as his top choice?

The Bournemouth version sounds to me like a live performance, so committed and articulate is the playing. Although there are occasional rough moments this seems to me to be a small price to pay when set against the overall achievement. By contrast the Berliners play so beautifully that some of the emotional strife is lost.

Chris Balaam, Skipton

Birthday Björling

With reference to WF Hurst's disappointment that Jussi Björling's 50th anniversary of his death had been ignored (Letters, December, page 10), there is a great opportunity for reparation in February 2011 when we can celebrate the centenary of his birth. Sweden will be honouring this incomparable tenor and its King has agreed to oversee the celebrations. Since coming home from school and hearing JB for the first time on the radio, no voice has spoken to my soul in the same way.

Anita Saundersuk, via email

Editorial notes

In December's The Trial, Rosvaenge was described as a German tenor. He was, in fact, Danish.

We misspelled 'Cascavelle' in Replay (December, page 116); for Cascavelle recordings, please visit www.discovery-records.com

OBITUARY



HUGUES CUÉNOD

Born June 26, 1902

Died December 3, 2010

In an article written, I'd have sworn, no more than five or six years ago, Hugues Cuénod was reported, "when last heard of", to be "still going strong". But that, it turns out, was in 1997 when he was a mere 95. His death was announced on December 3, 2010. He had in the meantime gained his centenary and celebrated, the moment Swiss Law allowed, by marrying his (male) partner.

"And so you think I must have heard him? Seen him at Glyndebourne, perhaps?" people of a certain age will speculatively murmur – the answer to which is, "No, you can't possibly have done, for otherwise you would certainly remember". For one thing, he was an unforgettable figure on the stage: six-foot-five of gentle angularity, gleeful in cunning or in kindness, sparky in every improbable joint, or sleepily melancholic. There was a Dickensian vividness about him; or he could have been all the creatures in *Alice*, from the White Rabbit to the aged man a-sitting on a gate. In opera he was a wicked Don Basilio, a surreal Nurse in Monteverdi, a matron beyond the size of dreams in Cavalli's *L'Ormindo*. Stravinsky chose him to "create" Sellem the auctioneer in *The Rake's Progress*, and practically all the leading French composers of the age wrote for him. For the voice was as special as the stage

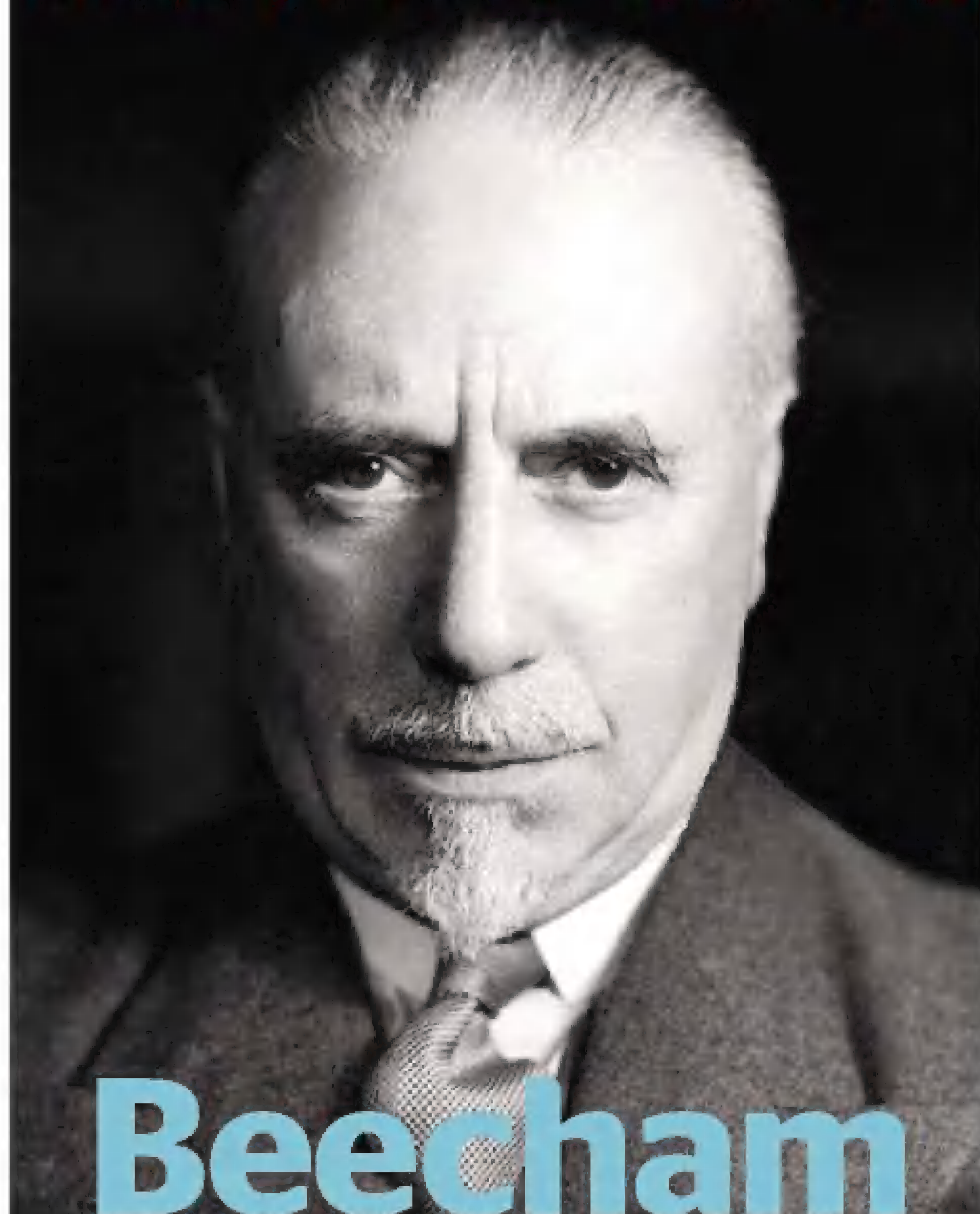
presence. A high, crackly tenor, quivers of vibrato putting the match to it in youth, a strange unearthly beauty providing gentle incandescence in old age.

And sing into old age he did. None of those present will have forgotten the wonderful evening on which, under the title "Such the Tenor Man Told", the pianist Graham Johnson brought the 82-year-old tenor back to the Wigmore Hall, the tenor man in question taking his full share, including duets by Monteverdi in which he returned to the music that had first introduced him 50 years earlier. This was in the famous and pioneering album directed by Nadia Boulanger, the great teacher in the inter-war years. After the war the set was reissued in England, again on 78s, widening its appeal. It is quite possible that many of those who now look doubtfully at the name of Hugues Cuénod, feeling that they know it somehow yet are not quite sure how, will be remembering those labels when the records opened new casements and ushered in the Monteverdi revival.

Cuénod's singing on that evening in 1984 was beautiful beyond anything I have heard to compare: pure, flexible, even and infinitely touching in expression. On records, he can be heard in mediaeval song through to the elaborate *Lecçons de Ténèbres* by Couperin. There are *mélodies* such as Chabrier's *L'île inconnue*, and modern pieces of baffling complexity such as Stravinsky's 1952 Cantata. And for a reminder of the naughty young man who for a while was content simply with his talent to amuse, it is worth looking out an anthology, a Christmas party in the Nimbus Prima Voce series, where in the "Lament of the Serpent Man" Cuénod unwinds in Latin-American rhythms while unknown instruments cavort in mournful glee. **John Steane**

COMING NEXT MONTH

GRAMOPHONE



Beecham

There has never been a more influential British conductor than Sir Thomas Beecham, creator of orchestras and blazing inspiration for generations. But few descriptions of the man get past the famous wit. He has remained something of a closed book. Now, 50 years after his death, *Gramophone's* Rob Cowan searches for the artist behind the mask.

Also in the March issue

The *Gramophone* Interview - pioneering composer Steve Reich

The Cardinal's Musick follow up their *Gramophone* Award-winning Byrd project

***Peter and the Wolf*
Jeremy Nicholas selects his favourite recording**

ON SALE FEBRUARY 7

PHOTOGRAPHY: GORDON ANTHONY/GETTY IMAGES

LIBERATION

Jersey International Music Festival

6-9th May 2011

Internationally acclaimed stars perform beautiful music in stunning settings



"Music making in a relaxed and picturesque framework; mark 'Jersey' in your 2011 diary"
Musical Opinion

"Interesting, engaging, welcoming and fun"
Telegraph

Festival Highlights include:

Masterworks at Chateau Vermont

Michael Collins, Nicola Benedetti, Natalie Clein & the Sitkovetsky Trio perform Brahms' celebrated Clarinet Quintet & Beethoven's Clarinet Trio at a beautiful stately home.

Jazz at Elizabeth Castle

A family day out headlined by the British Jazz star Claire Teal & her trio playing popular jazz classics.

Liberation Gala at Jersey Opera House

A stunning Gala with Mozart's Violin concerto No. 5 and Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations.

Liberated with Lorca at Mont Orgueil Castle

Walk the beautiful north coast & listen to Spanish guitar music illustrating the life of the poet Lorca who died 75 years ago.

Festival Artistes include:

Nicola Benedetti - Violin
"Benedetti has the gift of communication in spades"
The Independent

Michael Collins - Clarinet
"A class act"
Gramophone

Alexander Sitkovetsky - Violin
"A Star of the New Century"
The Strad

Natalie Clein - Cello
"Soaringly passionate"
The Times

Wu Qian - Piano
"Richly coloured, majestic with dreamy lyricism."
The Independent

Clare Teal & her Jazz trio
"Music to melt to"
Jamie Cullen

Box Office:

Tel: 0843 208 0500 www.quaytickets.com

Festival packages: Travtel from £399 pp for 4 nights Package includes 3* hotel, flights & tickets

Tel: 01534 496 677

www.liberationjersey.com

Jersey
The Enriching

Editor's Choice

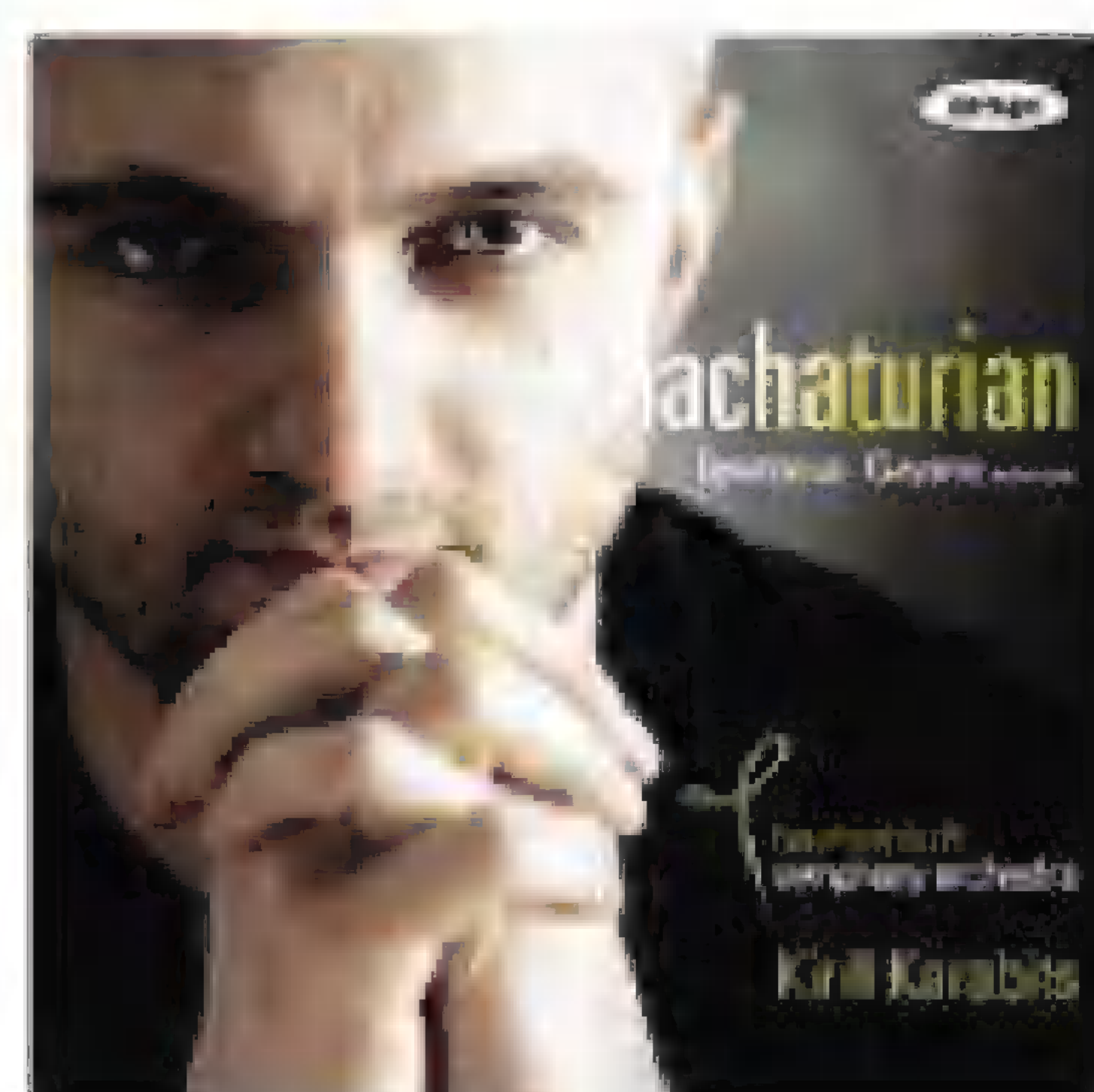
James Inverne's pick of this month's outstanding new discs - hear excerpts online



To coincide with this issue's cover story, visit the *Gramophone* Player at the *Gramophone* website for a marvellous complete Liszt (pictured below) performance. At the same time, as always, you can hear extended excerpts from all of our Editor's Choice selections. A new complete classic recording will join those already on offer, which to date have included Mozart symphonies from Anthony Collins and the Sinfonia of London, Chabrier from Ginette Doyen, Dowland and Campian from René Soames and Bach from Fritz Lehmann and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Don't miss the latest addition, available to stream at www.gramophone.co.uk



BRUCKNER
Symphony No 6
London Philharmonic Orchestra / Christoph Eschenbach
LPO
I'd suggest - and certainly on this evidence - that Christoph Eschenbach is more of a natural conductor of Bruckner than Mahler (though he has made a speciality of Mahler in recent times and I'm sure many will disagree with me). It's not that I dislike his Mahler, but what can seem overly deliberate there becomes structurally intense here. The London Phil are on fine form.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 63**



KHACHATURIAN
Highlights from Gayaneh and Spartacus
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra / Kirill Karabits
Onyx
This is the first product of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's collaboration with Onyx and a splendid sign of things to come it is, too. Kirill Karabits is stylistically at home in Khachaturian and finds a high Romanticism which manages always to feel freshly rethought. The playing is exceptionally fine in what is a hugely enjoyable recording.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 66**



MENDELSSOHN
Violin Concerto, Op 64. Octet, Op 20
James Ehnes *vs* Seattle Chamber Music Society; Philharmonia Orchestra / Vladimir Ashkenazy
Onyx
Wonderful performances of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto aren't exactly hard to find, but this makes a smashing complement to Leonidas Kavakos's recent version on Sony (10/09). Where Kavakos was coolly, elegantly detached, James Ehnes brings big-hearted passion in a fast, to-the-romantic-point reading. Rather stunning.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 67**



BRAHMS
Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel, Op 24. Two Rhapsodies, Op 79. Six Piano Pieces, Op 118. Four Piano Pieces, Op 119
Murray Perahia *pf*
Sony Classical
It has been a long time indeed since Murray Perahia recorded any Brahms. It has been worth the wait and then some. For he brings to Brahms (as to every composer) an absolute refusal to bluster or exaggerate, finding the musical and emotional truth of these works through his uncanny focus. Not a note wasted.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 77**

Reissue of the month



Posterity had passed judgement anew on Sir John Gielgud even before his death, deciding that he was not after all the old-fashioned sacrificer of truth to beautiful pronunciation that he had latterly been painted.

And in his narration of Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* here, there is pointed mischief aplenty amidst the mellifluousness. Ron Moody and Tom Courtenay are as splendidly characterful as the Boston Symphony Chamber Players. The various works here re-emerge in bracing sound in this reissue on Eloquence. A classic, which deserves to be in every music lover's collection. My only complaint is that the notes are rather generic.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 74**

DVD & Blu-ray of the month



The thing that most strikes one about this performance is how wonderfully Plácido Domingo acts this role, one of Verdi's most challenging

even when it is sung by the stipulated baritone and not, as here, by a tenor. But his excursion to baritone repertoire has inspired Domingo to rediscover the truly great, detailed singing-actor he can be. The supporting cast (it does feel a bit like that) are as fine as one can find today. Joseph Calleja is a blistering Adorno, Marina Poplavskaya a moving Amelia. Pappano and his orchestra are superb, blazing away in the pit.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 95**

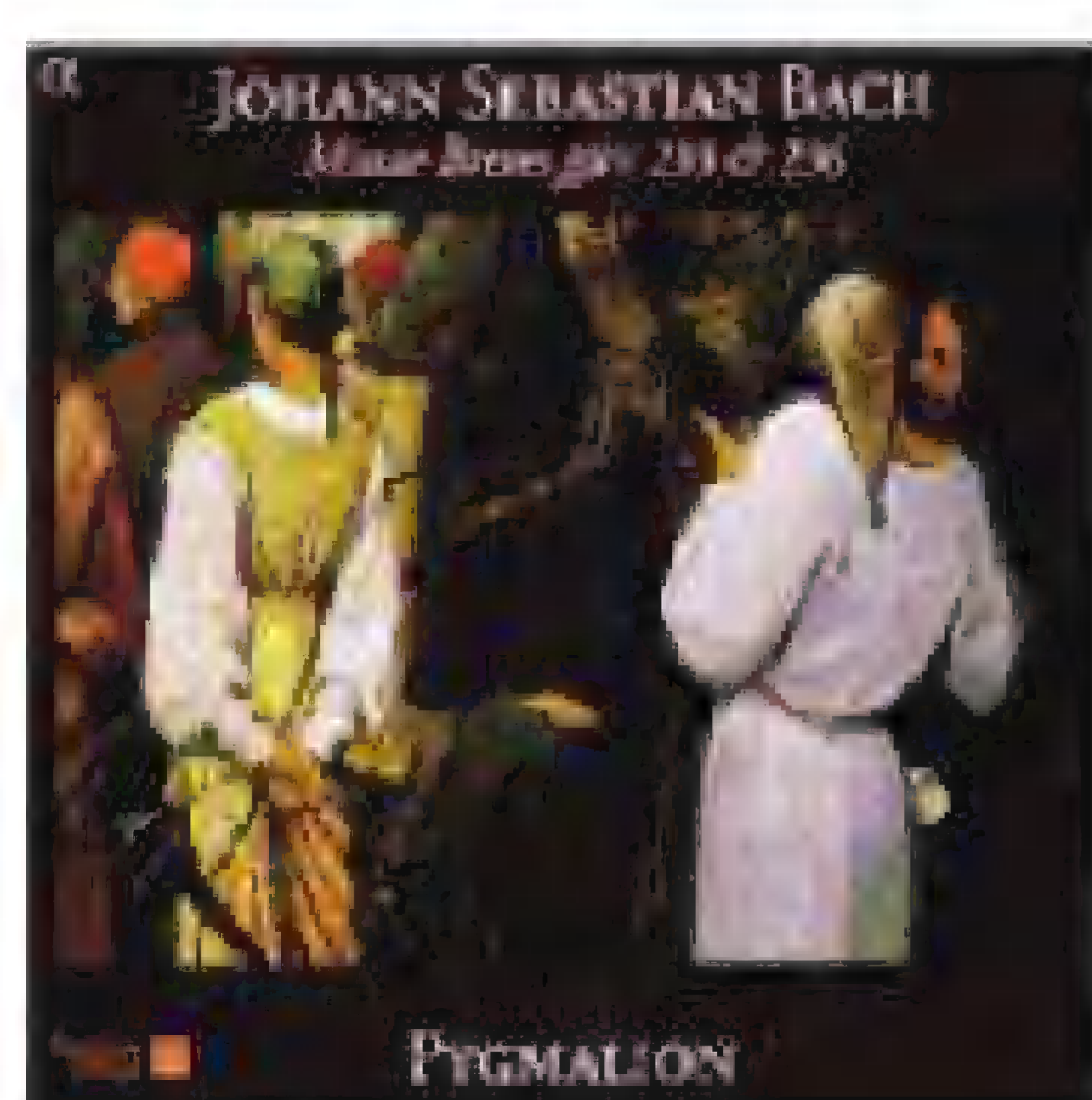
Joan Sutherland in Glyndebourne's *I puritani*:
'Even her shining top notes remain always within the musical frame of the performance...the sheer quality of her voice in 1960 is staggering'



MOZART
Complete Piano Sonatas
Daniel-Ben Pienaar *pf*
Avie
This is one of those lovely surprises. A comparatively little-known pianist (though he has received very good notices in these pages before) ventures on to well-trodden ground and immediately finds his own distinctive path. These are performances that manage at once to feel both contemporary and true to the spirit of past ages. Pienaar is not afraid to employ the odd trick for effect, but what effects they are!
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 78**



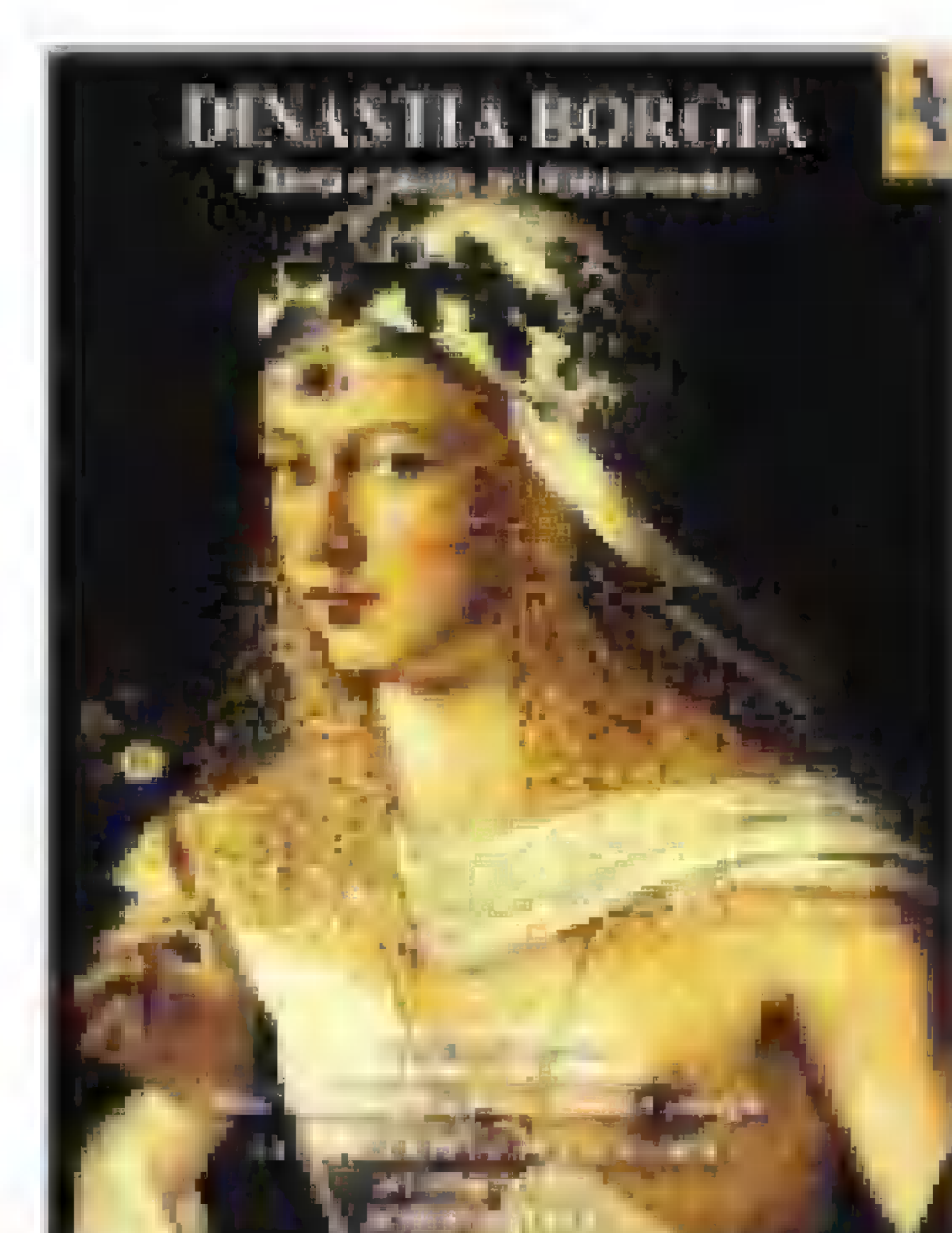
BRAHMS
Ein deutsches Requiem
Arnold Schoenberg Choir; Vienna Philharmonic / Nikolaus Harnoncourt
RCA Red Seal
Tricky one, this. Not in terms of whether Harnoncourt's fascinating new recording of this work deserves to be here, exactly. But there are two contrasting and almost equally fine versions this month, the more dramatic rival being from Marek Janowski on Pentatone. Which you prefer will be down to what you're after. This one gives a new view of a great old warhorse.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 80**



JS BACH
Cantata No 118. Masses – BWV233; BWV236
Pygmalion / Raphael Pichon
Alpha
An outstanding disc, this, full of soul and beauty. If Pygmalion make attractiveness of sound a priority, they never swamp Bach's vocal lines with lushness. There is a poise, or as our reviewer Jonathan Freeman-Attwood puts it, a dignity and a grip in everything they do here. Neither is a sense of narrative or emotional development neglected. First-rate.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 81**

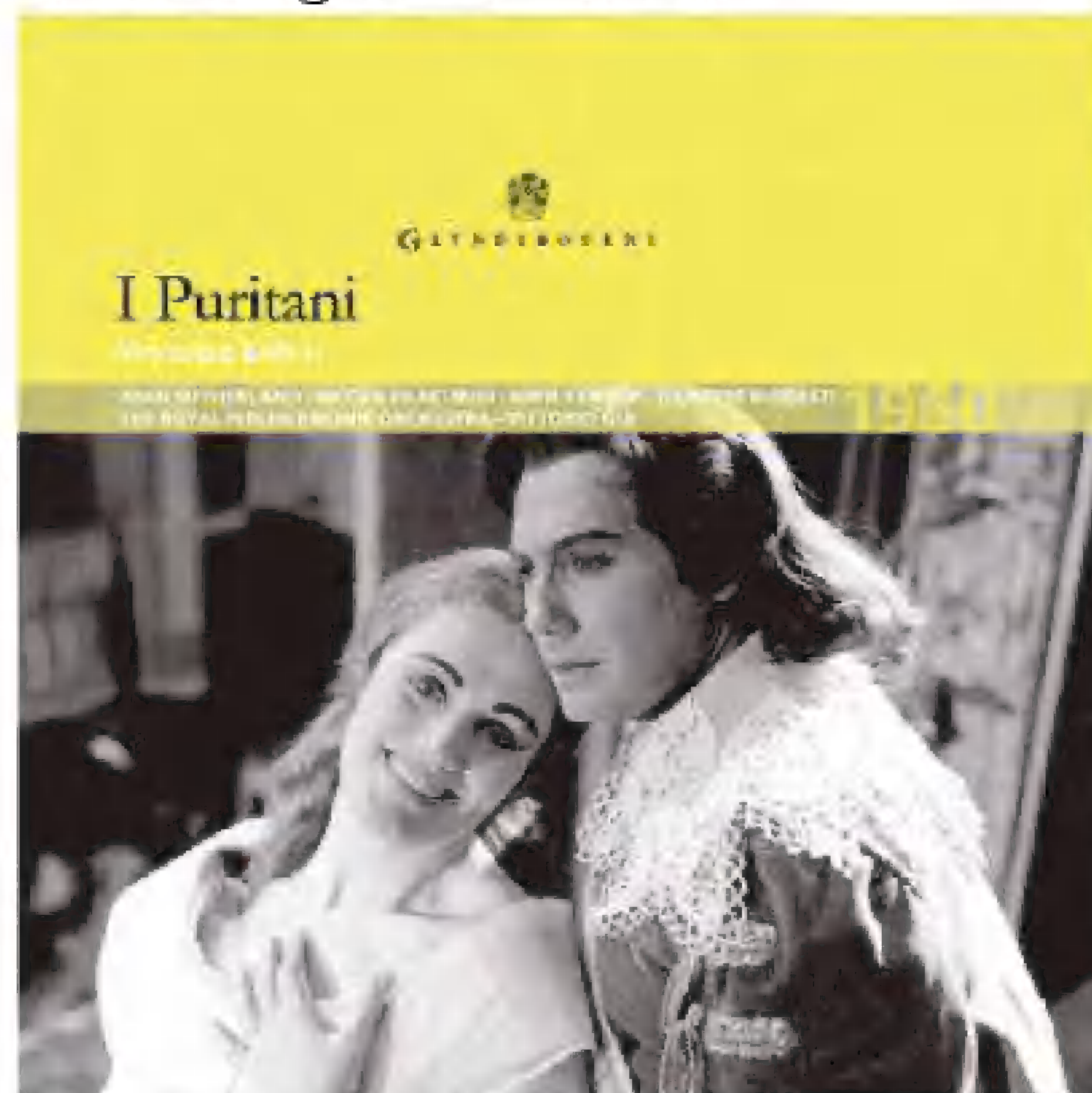


BIZET
Clovis et Clotilde. Te Deum
Nord-Pas-de-Calais Choir; Lille National Orchestra / Jean-Claude Casadesu
Naxos
Even if you know your Bizet (and let's face it, not many of us know much beyond *Carmen* and a few others), you're unlikely to have come across *Clovis et Clotilde*. Conductor Jean-Claude Casadesu found it in a library and this first recording reveals it as freshly inspired, full of a young man's early brilliance. The *Te Deum*'s good too. One complaint – where's the libretto?
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 83**



'DINASTIA BORGIA'
'Church and Power in the Renaissance'
Hespèrion XXI / Jordi Savall
Alia Vox
Jordi Savall's recordings these days are so much more – as in other recent issues, a book's worth of essays and beautiful prints accompanies this three-disc journey through the music of the Borgia dynasty. Lucrezia was the most (in)famous, but this culminates in "the spiritual triumph" of St Francis and their cultural legacy. A set to leave you enriched.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 86**

Recording of the month



BELLINI
I puritani
Glyndebourne Chorus; Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Vittorio Gui
Glyndebourne Festival Opera
This is a timely release, given recent sad events. The emergence of one of Dame Joan Sutherland's finest performances on record so soon after her passing reminds us of her magnificent gifts. But it would be a shame were this release to be seen only in those terms.
For here again is a Vittorio Gui recording that will take pride of

place on my shelves, alongside his unsurpassed *Nabucco* (Callas, Bechi) and *Count Ory* (Juan Oncina). The naturalness which this conductor brings to the proceedings here makes the drama all the more credible (let's face it, not a charge often levelled at Bellini) and permeates through the entire cast.
So if this is the Sutherland show, it never feels like it. Ensemble is the watchword here, and part of the glory of her performance is the way she modulates even

the shining top notes to remain always within the musical frame of the performance. That said, the sheer quality of her voice in 1960 is staggering and many are the moments that leave your mouth agape, all even more effective for the fact that there isn't any showboating.
The rest of the cast boasts no superstars, but all are fine and repay Glyndebourne's 1960 *Puritani* with great dramatic conviction. Great occasion, great set.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 90**

SOUNDBITES

Gallery View p16 » Interview p19 » Diary p21 » One to Watch p23 » Richard Eyre p25 » Philip Kennicott p26 » The Trial p28 » Biography of an Instrument p30 » Quiz p31

Andriessen wins 2011 Grawemeyer Award

The 2011 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition, worth \$100,000, has been given to Louis Andriessen for his work *La Commedia*. The Dutch composer's opera – his fourth – is based on

Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and was premiered at the 2008 Holland Festival by Netherlands Opera and US film director Hal Hartley. Andriessen dedicated the work to his late wife Jeanette, who died before its premiere.



Louis Andriessen, happier than he looks

"Just before the Second World War, I was born in a side street by a small canal in the medieval centre of Utrecht," said Andriessen. "Believe me, 71 years later, getting the world-famous Grawemeyer Award for *La Commedia* seems to be completely unreal. How could this happen?"

"When I was four years old, my father walked with me over the bridge

of the canal to St Catherine's Cathedral. In that church, he played the organ and twice a week conducted the choir – which included 40 boy trebles. Did it all start sometime then? Perhaps it was hearing him play the organ when I started composing 10 years later. My father taught me: 'Don't think you are important, we are just worms, but we have the duty to serve the music and write as well as we can.'"

The Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition is awarded every year by the University of Louisville. The first winner, in 1985, was Witold Lutoslawski, for his Third Symphony, while subsequent winners have included György Ligeti, Harrison Birtwistle, John Adams, Tan Dun, Thomas Adès, Pierre Boulez, Kaija Saariaho and – last year – York Höller.

Agency launches label

International Classical Artists – formerly Van Walsum Management – is launching its own recording label. The artist management company is home to some of the world's leading musicians, including conductors Kent Nagano and Michael Tilson Thomas and pianist Stephen Kovacevich.

The label – to be called ICA Classics and distributed worldwide by Naxos – aims to release 34 DVDs and 24 CDs per year of both new recordings and archive material dating back to 1954.

The first batch of 10 DVDs appeared in January. From such archives as the BBC, WDR Cologne and the Boston Symphony come first commercial releases from Rudolf Kempe, Charles Munch, Sir Georg Solti, David Oistrakh and the Beaux Arts Trio. New films

include recent performances from Hartmut Haenchen (Mahler's Symphony No 6) and Antoni Wit (Szymanowski's Symphonies Nos 3 and 4). Eight CD releases include performances by Maria Callas, Otto Klemperer and Emil Gilels.

With many of the agency's artists appearing regularly on existing labels, it will be interesting to see how many will feature on the in-house label. Of the two new recordings from Wit and Haenchen, ICA chairman Stephen Wright said: "These are the kind of audio-visual projects that the major labels would not be in a position to undertake."



The Sydney Symphony has appointed 25-year-old **Nicholas Carter** its first associate conductor. Carter, who has served as the Symphony's assistant conductor for the past 18 months, will conduct the orchestra's regional tour, a performance with mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter, and a special concert in Sydney Town Hall in June.



The Royal Philharmonic Society and the Association of British Orchestras are joining forces to launch the Salomon Prize for orchestral players. Named after violinist **Johann Peter Salomon**, the £1000 prize will be awarded annually "to a musician who has shown commitment and dedication above and beyond expected service".

BBC names 2010 Choir of the Year

The BBC's 2010 Choir of the Year is the Wellensian Consort, comprised of former Wells Cathedral School students and members of staff.

The Consort triumphed over six choirs in the grand final, held at the Royal Festival Hall during November. These six had been whittled down from 150 groups of all ages and musical styles, involving over 6000 singers. Finalists in four categories – Children, Youth, Adult and Open – and two wildcards sang for the panel of judges, including composer Eric Whitacre, vocalist and broadcaster Mary King, soprano Elin Manahan Thomas and conductor Ken Burton. The Wellensian Consort, a wildcard finalist, performed a wide range of repertoire, from John Rutter to the Spiritual *Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?*, to claim the top prize.

All members of the 22-strong vocal group are pursuing individual music careers, from attending leading UK music colleges and universities to serving in cathedrals.



The Wellensian Consort is BBC 2010 Choir of the Year

TAKING NOTE ELSEWHERE IN THE NEWS...

The Independent

The ENO's latest production of *Don Giovanni* has been accused of "shock tactics". Two of the opera's scenes have come under fire, "one implying the gang rape of a woman by a masked mob wearing T-shirts featuring the

image of Jesus Christ". Several critics have suggested the new interpretation is "sensationalism designed to attract a younger crowd", despite the opera's dark subject matter. "Keeping opera fresh...for contemporary audiences is about creating work which has its finger on the pulse," said artistic director John Berry. www.independent.co.uk

GRAMOPHONE TALKS TO...

James Ehnes

The violinist on recording Mendelssohn's Concerto

You must have been playing the Concerto for much of your life...

This is the first big concerto I played as a kid – at nine years of age – so, yes, it has been in my life for a very long time! I play the piece probably once every season, but it is written so well for the instrument, both musically and technically, that it's always fun and interesting. This particular recording was made during a run of performances with the Philharmonia Orchestra. For those of us in the music industry, the Concerto may seem ubiquitous, but judging from audience reaction, it is always a special experience to hear a live performance, and I tap into that feeling.



What are the challenges of playing such a well-known concerto?

It's not a tremendously awkward piece but it is tremendously intricate. It demands polish and finesse – all pieces do, of course, but for a piece that is "notey", for want of a better word, it is also extremely exposed. The *Allegro molto appassionato* has a sort of breathlessness to me. Several people have commented that my interpretation is fairly brisk, but that's the tempo that feels right. I do try to make an effort, even with repertoire as common as this, to come up with an interpretation that isn't unduly influenced by others. Back at my parents' house, I've probably got 10 LPs of

violinists playing this work, but in preparing for the recording I purposely avoided them.

Why pair the Concerto with the Octet?

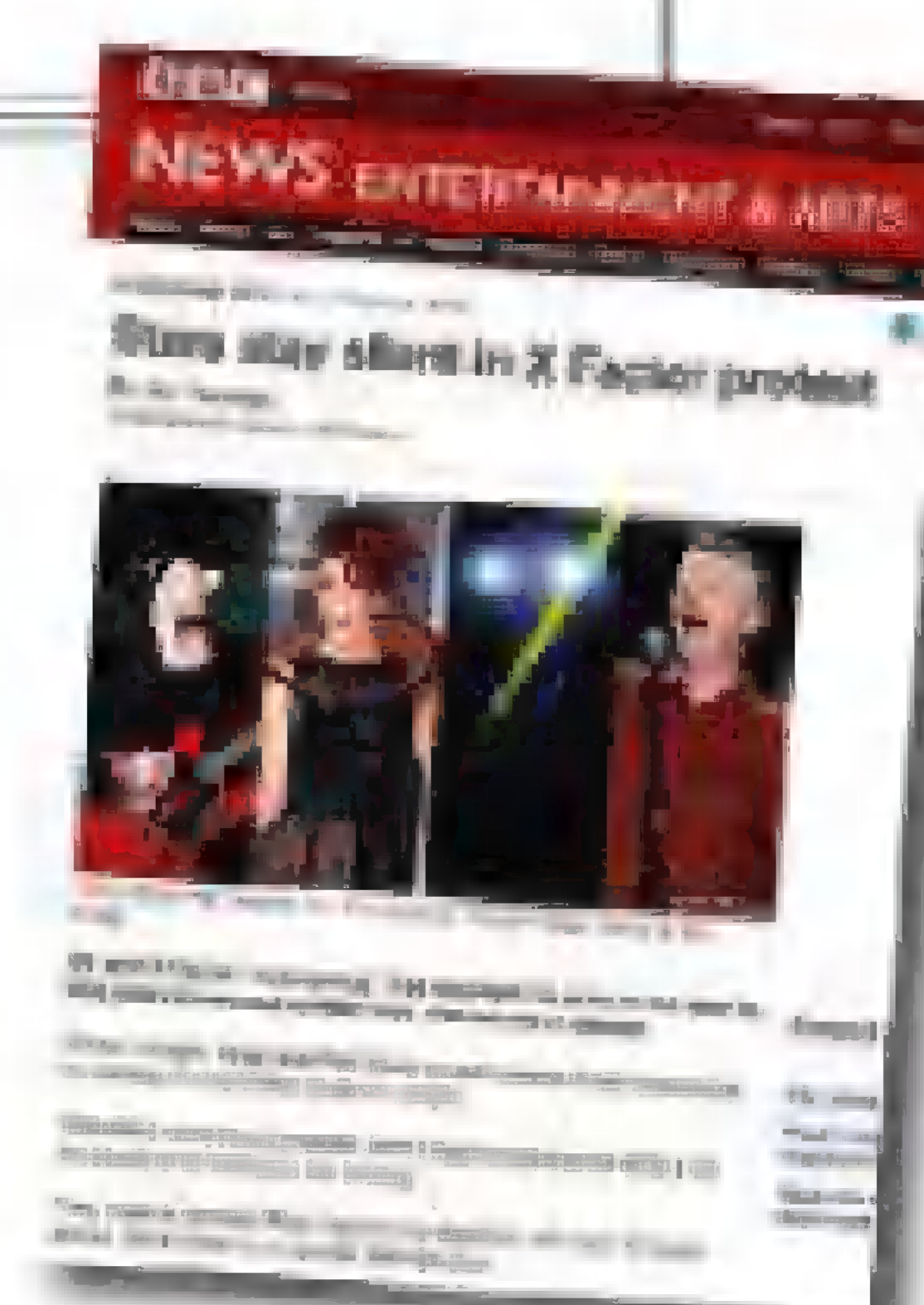
I have been involved with the Seattle Chamber Music Society for 15 years and will become its artistic director next season, so I thought it would be nice to include some Mendelssohn chamber music that we could also play at our summer and winter festivals. I liked the idea of pairing a very early and a very late piece, and in the end they complemented each other well.

James Ehnes's Mendelssohn recording is reviewed on page 67

BBC News

The latest crusade against *The X Factor*'s popular chart domination has taken an unlikely turn towards the classical. Hoping to repeat the success of last year's Rage Against the Machine campaign, this year's protest, dubbed "Cage Against the Machine", will pit a new recording of John Cage's 4'33"

by pop musicians including Orbital, Imogen Heap, Madness's Suggs and The Kooks against the inevitable *X Factor* bid for Christmas number one. The single will raise money for five charities. www.bbc.co.uk/news



Two conductors were honoured recently for their musical contributions. **Gustavo Dudamel**, Gothenburg Symphony music director, was appointed Honorary Citizen of Gothenburg, while Vladimir Ashkenazy received the Elgar Society Medal for "his role in furthering the legacy of Sir Edward Elgar through performances...around the world".



Oxford's **Bodleian Libraries** has announced the endowment of the Alfred Brendel Curatorship of Music, named in honour of the pianist and scholar. The gift makes possible specialist curatorship of the Bodleian's world-leading music collection, an invaluable resource for musicians, musicologists and teachers.



GALLERY VIEW



Building Barenboim

The Thames has a history of eye-catching advertising stunts. Last year a sculpture of a polar bear was floated up the river to raise awareness of melting ice caps, following in the path of a statue of Michael Jackson a few years earlier. In 1999 a giant naked photograph of TV presenter Gail Porter was projected on to the side of the Palace of Westminster to promote a magazine and the Australian cricket team used a similar method to deliver a taunt to their

English rivals. There is history here. When the makers of Oxo cubes bought a power station on the south bank of the Thames, they wanted to add a tower carrying illuminated adverts. Permission was denied, so instead the tower was built with windows on all sides containing the geometric shapes - or, rather, letters - OXO, thus circumventing rules.

The advertisement above was projected on to the Shell Centre in London in November,

to promote the Shell Classical International series at the Royal Festival Hall. It shows Daniel Barenboim rehearsing in the hall earlier in the year - and you can see him playing Liszt piano concertos, with the Berlin Staatskapelle, conducted by Pierre Boulez, on June 13.

More immediately in the series, Stephen Hough also performs Liszt's First Concerto on January 16, with Iván Fischer and the Budapest Festival Orchestra.



Austrian **Sascha Goetzel** will remain artistic director and principal conductor of the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra for a further three years. In 2007, Goetzel replaced Gürer Aykal, the orchestra's music director since its foundation in 1999. BIPO's second disc for Onyx Classics will be recorded this year.



Musicians from the Royal Scottish National Orchestra have teamed with the Children's Hospice Association of Scotland to provide a three-year music programme for patients of **Rachel House** hospice. RSNO musicians will interact with children, families and staff.

PHOTOGRAPHY: BARNEY NEWMAN/SHELL, ULI WEBER/DECCA, JAMIE YOUNG, MARK ALLAN, HARALD HOFFMANN, BORUSAN ISTANBUL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

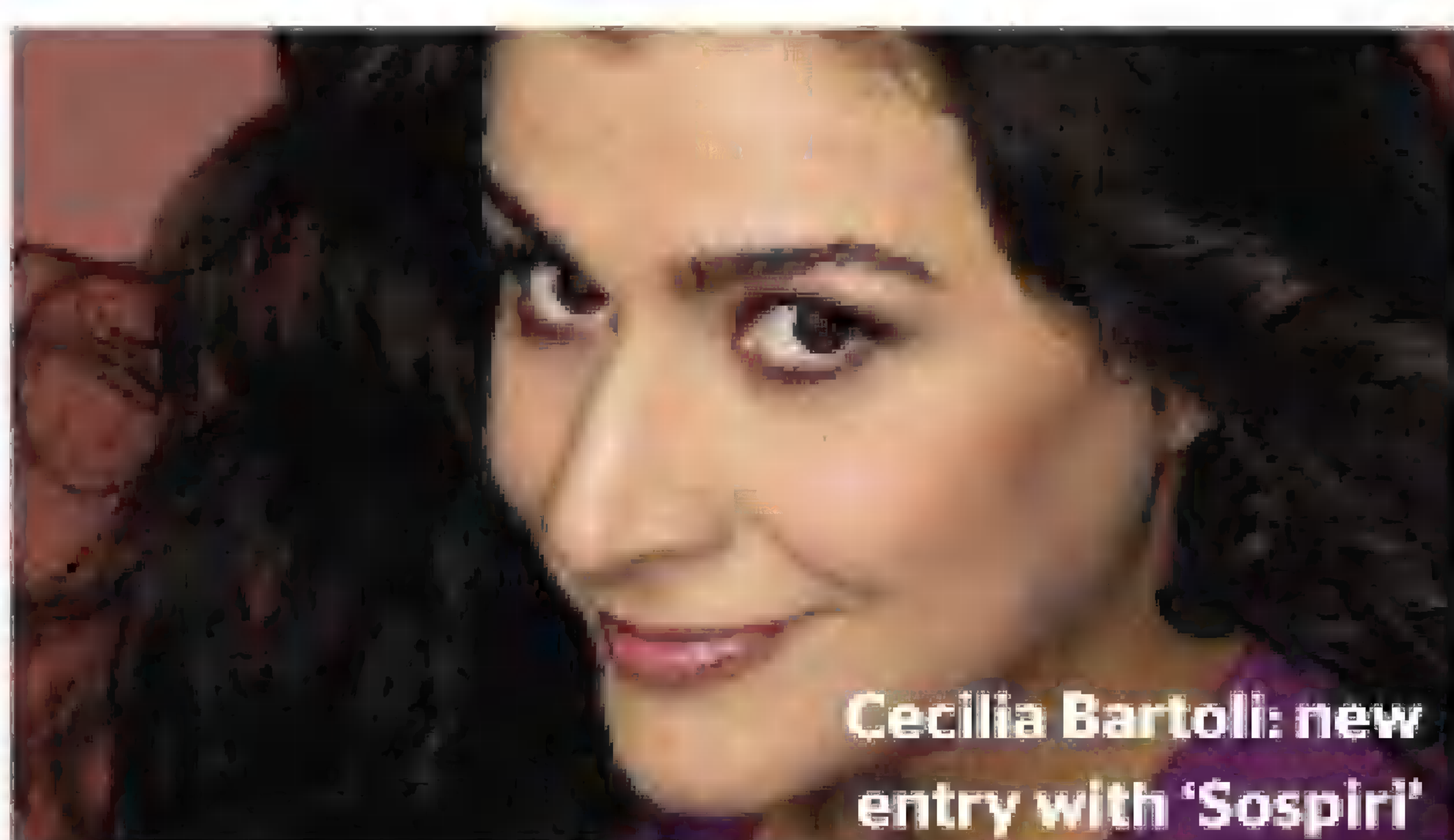
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- 3 (New) **Sospiri**
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- 4 (4) **Whitacre - Light & Gold**
Eric Whitacre Singers; Laudibus *Decca*
- 5 (6) **The 50 Greatest Pieces of Classical Music** LPO / David Parry *X5*
- 6 (5) **Tchaikovsky. Bruch - Violin Concs**
Nicola Benedetti; Czech PO / Hrůša *DG*
- 7 (3) **Hawes - Highgrove Suite**
Claire Jones; Philharmonia Orch *Classic FM*
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Cecilia Bartoli: new entry with 'Sospiri'

Chart for week ending December 4, 2010
(previous week's position in brackets).

Log on to www.gramophone.co.uk for weekly updates of the chart, along with reviews of many of the featured recordings.

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GRAMOPHONE TALKS TO...

Murray Perahia

The pianist returns to recording Brahms following a 20-year hiatus

Brahms is not a composer we associate with you - or is that simply because you've recorded so much?

It might be. I've consistently loved Brahms - he was a very powerful composer for me from quite early on and I have always been moved by his music. I find a world of consolation, sorrow, nostalgia, passion - everything.

He lived much later into the 19th century than a lot of people realise.

I have a picture on my wall that shows a group of people at Clara Schumann's funeral in 1896. There's Brahms singing - probably the *Vier ernste Gesänge* - and there's Bram Elderling, the teacher of Adolf Busch. I knew Busch's family very well, his brother Hermann [Busch Quartet cellist] and, more importantly, I knew Rudolf Serkin very well. Serkin was Busch's partner in many of the recordings - he was his father-in-law. So it's not so far removed.

He was of a much later generation than the composers he is often associated with - Schumann, Wagner, Liszt...

I have often had the thought that had Brahms lived as long as Casals or Rubinstein, say into his 90s, do you know when he would have died? 1930! The history of music changed so much just in one year, like 1911 - and if



Brahms had been there, I wonder how it would have gone, because Schoenberg had great respect for Brahms. If Brahms were to say, "Mr Schoenberg, I think this atonality doesn't work. It's not quite right," the history of music would have changed drastically.

He seems to be a composer at a crossroads.

Yes, and it's so moving that Brahms was able to understand the harmony and counterpoint of Beethoven, of the older composers - let's say Handel, Bach and so on - and yet his almost Romantic sensibility ties him into Schumann.

Murray Perahia's Brahms disc is reviewed on page 77

More Vivaldi discoveries

Great news for Vivaldi fans. Two discoveries of previously lost manuscripts have surprised the music world in as many months.

Following October's unearthing of the flute concerto *Il gran mogul* among the Marquess of Lothian's family papers, November saw the discovery of two violin sonatas, which had been hidden in

a collection of manuscripts for 270 years. The works, believed to be for amateur musicians, were identified when the late businessman Gerald Coke donated a 180-page anthology of manuscripts by composers including Handel and Purcell to the Foundling Museum of London.

Following investigation and authentication by Vivaldi expert Michael Talbot, the works were performed at Liverpool Hope University last November.

Current Madison Opera general director **Allan Naplan** will become president and general director of Minnesota Opera in March 2011. "Finding the right successor to Kevin Smith's 30-year legacy was both a challenge and an honour," said Minnesota Opera board chair, Chip Emery. "We're thrilled to have found an extraordinary talent in Allan Naplan."



At the 2010 British Composer Awards announced in November, 30-year-old **Cheryl Frances-Hoad** took two prizes, while two awards brought their recipients commissions: Ryan Wigglesworth has been commissioned by BBC Radio 3's New Generation Artists scheme and Kerry Andrew by the Music Publishers Association.



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A CONVERSATION WITH...



The English soprano reveals to **Amanda Holloway** the sheer hard work behind her new disc, 'A Lesson in Love' – a self-assembled song-cycle about a young girl's first amour

Kate Royal strides through the crowded café, glossy chestnut hair falling in perfect ringlets, improbably long legs cased in vertiginous patent-leather boots. To envious observers, her progress through the world of classical music seems to have been just as serene. The reality, as always, is rather different. An exhausting photo shoot for *You* magazine yesterday was followed by a sleepless night with her one-year-old son. Today she faces publicity interviews for her new CD; next week it's New York for a high-profile concert at Carnegie Hall and, in a few weeks' time, there's the little matter of her own wedding.

But Kate Royal is nothing if not game. After a gulp of coffee and a bite of croissant, she plunges into an enthusiastic summary of her new CD, "A Lesson in Love". It's a song-cycle about a young girl's first experience of love, assembled by Royal herself out of mostly lesser-known works by an unlikely combination of 18 composers. EMI has allowed her to fashion a programme that shows off her fuller, more nuanced, post-pregnancy voice, in partnership with one of the best Lieder pianists in the world, Malcolm Martineau.

"Performing this is fantastic because it's like a mini-opera – you go through every strand of a young girl's emotions," she says with relish. "I want people to sit down with a bottle of wine and listen to the whole CD from beginning to end while reading the words. The poetry is so amazing in its own right and I really hope I haven't detracted from it in any way." Royal started researching the repertoire after her son was born, during "long nights in the rocking chair". It has truly been a labour of love. "People don't realise the hours that go into making a CD: all the preparation, deciding what you're going to put on it and

why, then learning it and making it your own. The recording is the last bit of that whole process. It's almost a full-time job, but you have to fit it in between everything else."

Royal hasn't got where she is today by balking at challenges. While still at school she was working two nights a week with a trio doing "dodgy cabaret" in local golf clubs and hotels. "When I went to college at 18, I'd done hundreds of shows already and I had absolutely no worries about being in front of an audience." Her silvery lyric soprano, already mature-sounding as a student, was honed over

six years at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. "It was a very slow process, working hard and learning lots of repertoire.

Technically it's an ongoing thing;

you never really feel you've conquered it."

Opera managements think otherwise: Royal's schedule is full of plum engagements for at least the next four years. In February, she's singing Pamina in the Royal Opera's *Die Zauberflöte*, before flying off to make her Met debut as Euridice in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* – "a very nice, gentle sing". The whole family will move to New York for six months, as actor husband Julian Ovenden is performing in a show on Broadway. After *Orfeo*, Royal intends to focus on motherhood. "I'm going to take on fewer engagements and spend more time with my son. I just don't want to miss out. I feel I've worked solidly for the past few years and I've achieved a lot, but I'm chasing my tail." Kožená, Netrebko, Matthews – Royal joins the long line of singers who face the working mother's dilemma. "But I'm absolutely not giving up," she says quickly. Which seems a suitably Royal motto to end on. ●

"A Lesson in Love" is released on February 7



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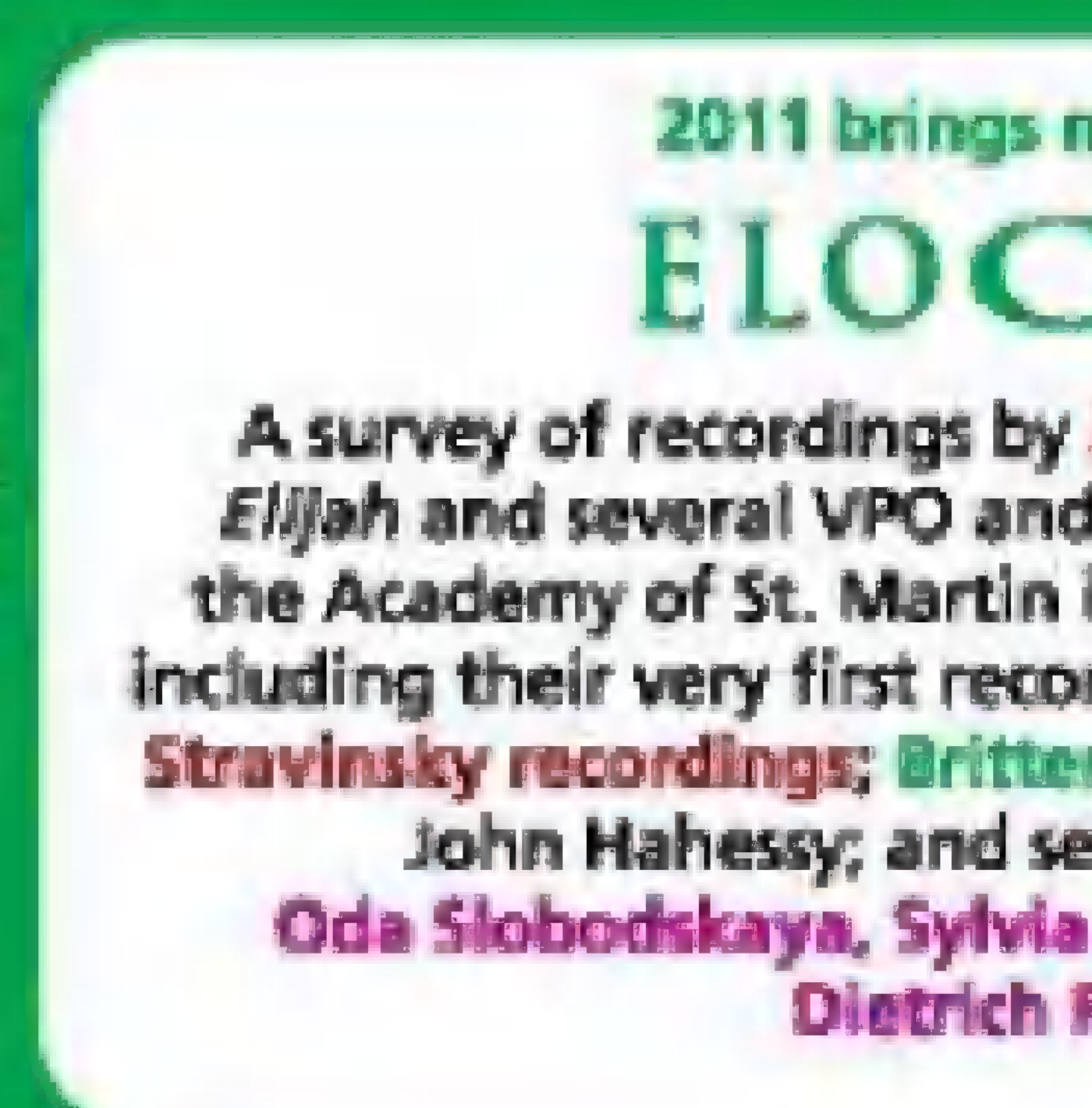
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DIARY

Stephen Hough

The life of an international musician is busy enough, says the leading pianist. Try turning composer as well

I'm writing this above the clouds somewhere between London and Budapest. "Your life is one long vacation, isn't it," said someone to me backstage once. Only my mouth was smiling. But now my recent recordings are over I feel less stressful and pressured, despite three concerts this coming weekend with the Budapest Festival Orchestra conducted by Mikhail Pletnev. When a great pianist is conducting there's always the fear that he will sweep the soloist off the stool and play himself.

Recording is the only way musicians can preserve the sounds over which they spend their lives agonising, yet there is no greater professional agony for me than this process. If only those pristine, shiny circles we insert into our machines could tell the stories of their creation! Sixty minutes, mined, cut and polished out of mountains which seem insurmountable at times. A week ago I was at Wyastone recording all the Chopin Waltzes; then over the past couple of days I've been at Potton Hall recording my own cycle *Other Love Songs* with the Prince Consort. I shouldn't make it all sound too negative though, because when the results come close to our ideals it can feel immensely, thrillingly fulfilling.

I've travelled to many places over the years but this is my first visit to Hungary. I'm particularly excited because it seems that there is a special musical gene in



'I'm conscious of Liszt's influence on everything a pianist does'

the Hungarian people. My first intimation of this came when I was at Chetham's School and went for my first Solfège class as a short-panted 10-year-old. Our teacher was an always vivacious, sometimes ferocious Hungarian lady called Cecelia Vajda who had us all tapping out the 7/8 rhythms from the *Gloria* of Britten's *Missa brevis* in our first lesson. I'm expecting no less from the receptionist at my hotel.

After our three concerts at the Palace of Arts I will be home – for about 30 hours before leaving on a six-week tour of North America. That should be enough time to unpack, repack, gather together my scores (and my flute sonata sketches, in case I have time to compose on the road) and

get a haircut. And to take one last drag of my feet through the moist carpet of London's autumn leaves, because when I return all will be bare and swept. I start in Vancouver and move from there to Seattle, Portland, Houston, Denver and Chicago, playing six different concertos with these cities' symphony orchestras. It was a busy but nicely planned tour, until Murray Perahia cancelled his Carnegie Hall recital and I was asked to replace him. So now, instead of a leisurely drive from Seattle to Portland along the glorious northern West Coast, I will be hurtling over to New York. The main stage of Carnegie Hall was actually the first public venue I played in New York, as a 21-year-old student in the finals of the Naumburg

Competition. The result that night changed my life; and, as grand as Carnegie is, there is always something strangely comforting in the memory of that unexpectedly sudden coming-of-age. I finish my US tour with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, beginning a cycle there of all four Tchaikovsky works for piano and orchestra. But as exciting as that may be, Chicago is home to one of the greatest shops in the world, Optimo Hats, out in the suburb of Beverly. I will be planning a trip there during my stay, even if I have to hijack a snow-plough to do so.

Looking forward, I will be playing with the Budapest Festival Orchestra again, but on that occasion conducted by their founder and music director, Iván Fischer, and in London, not Budapest. We're playing Liszt's First Concerto at the Royal Festival Hall as part of a small European tour as the celebrations for the bicentenary of the composer's birth begin. As this is the first concerto I played at the BBC Proms 25 years ago, it will be a small, private anniversary for me too. Whenever I play the music of Liszt I'm conscious of his formative influence on everything a pianist does. His hands shape our hands at the keyboard; for those of us who love him, they clasp us across the centuries in a warm embrace. 🎹

Stephen Hough plays Liszt's Piano Concerto No 1 at the Royal Festival Hall on January 16

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THE BRABANT ENSEMBLE / RICE

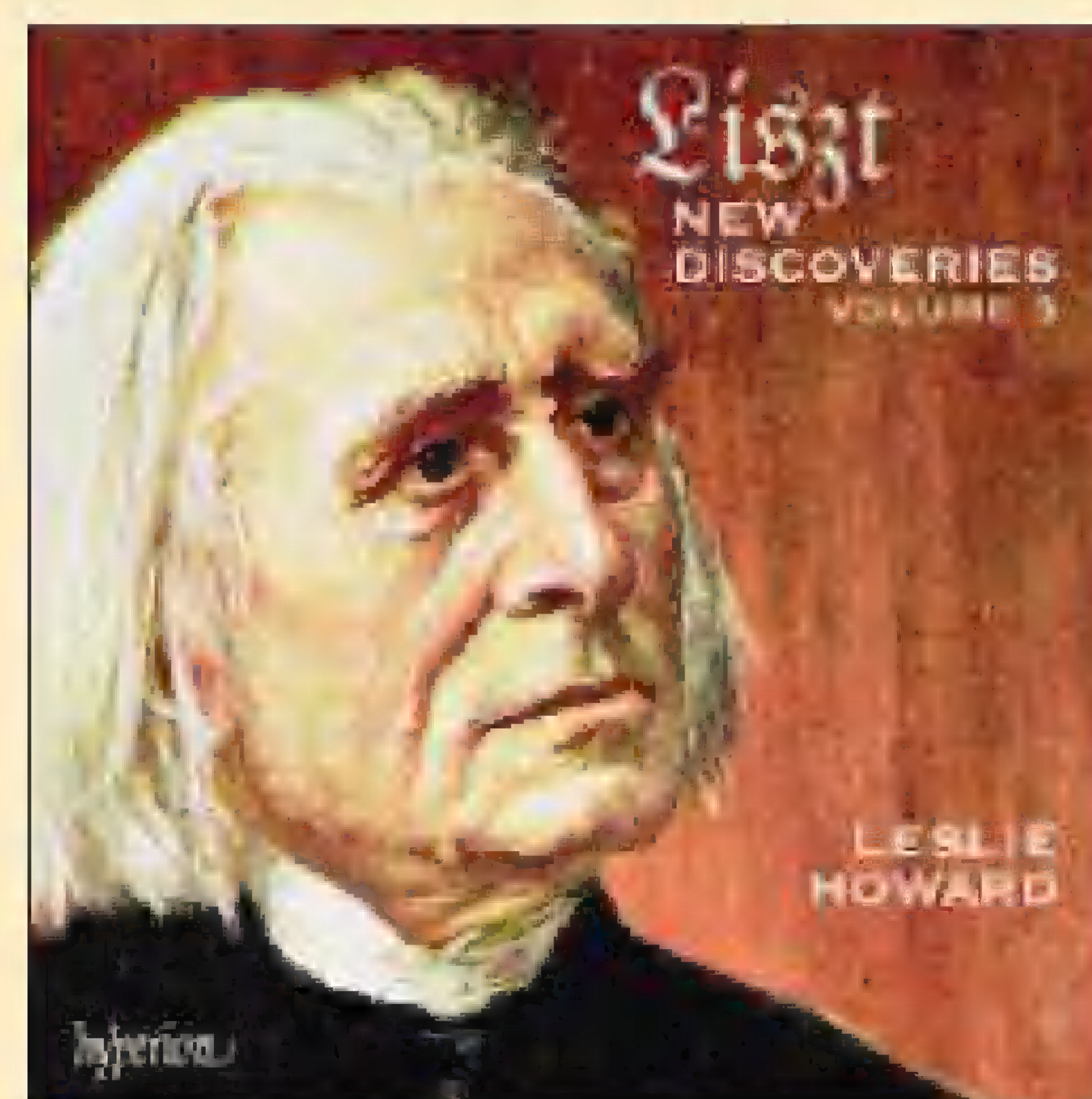


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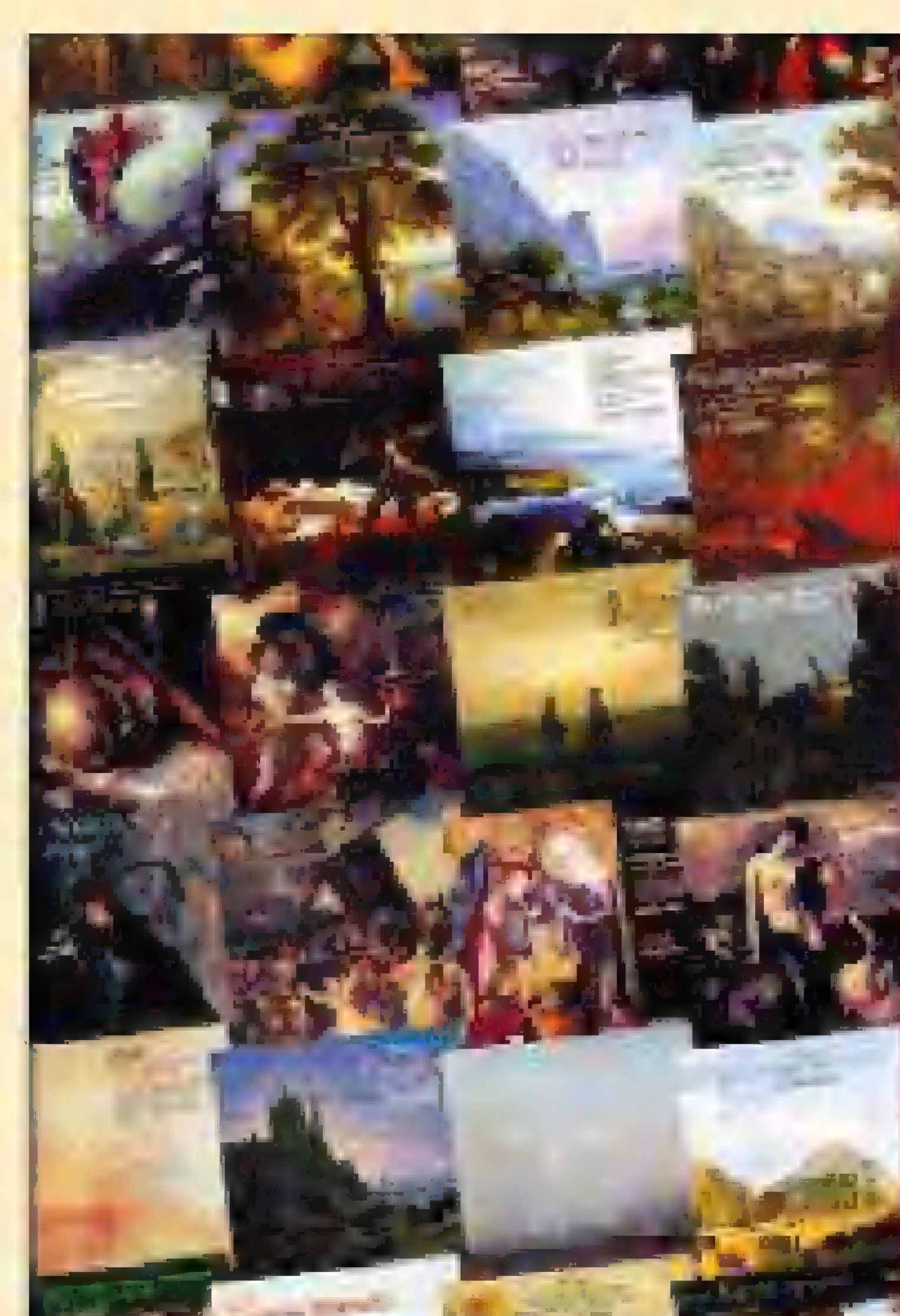
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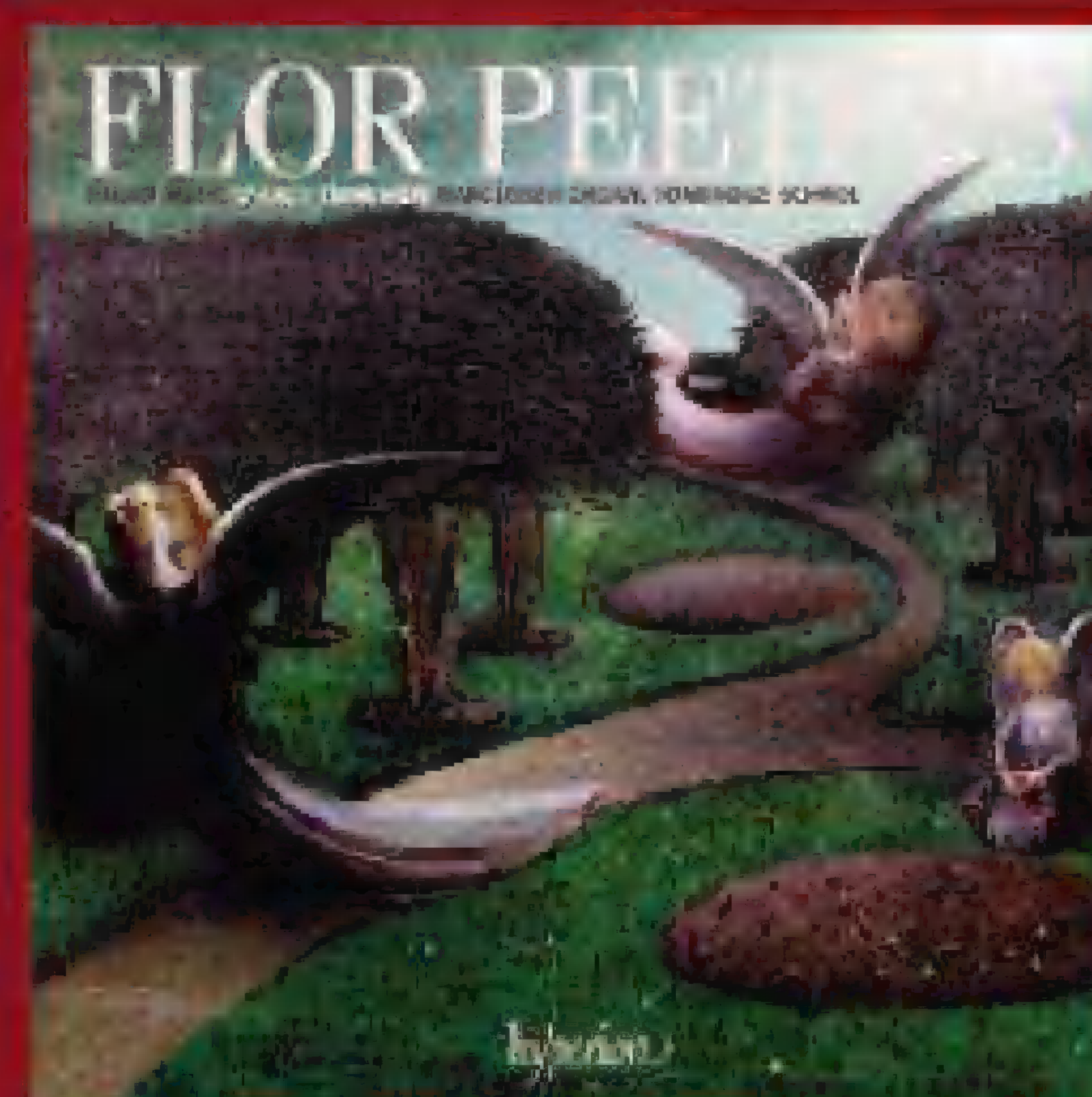
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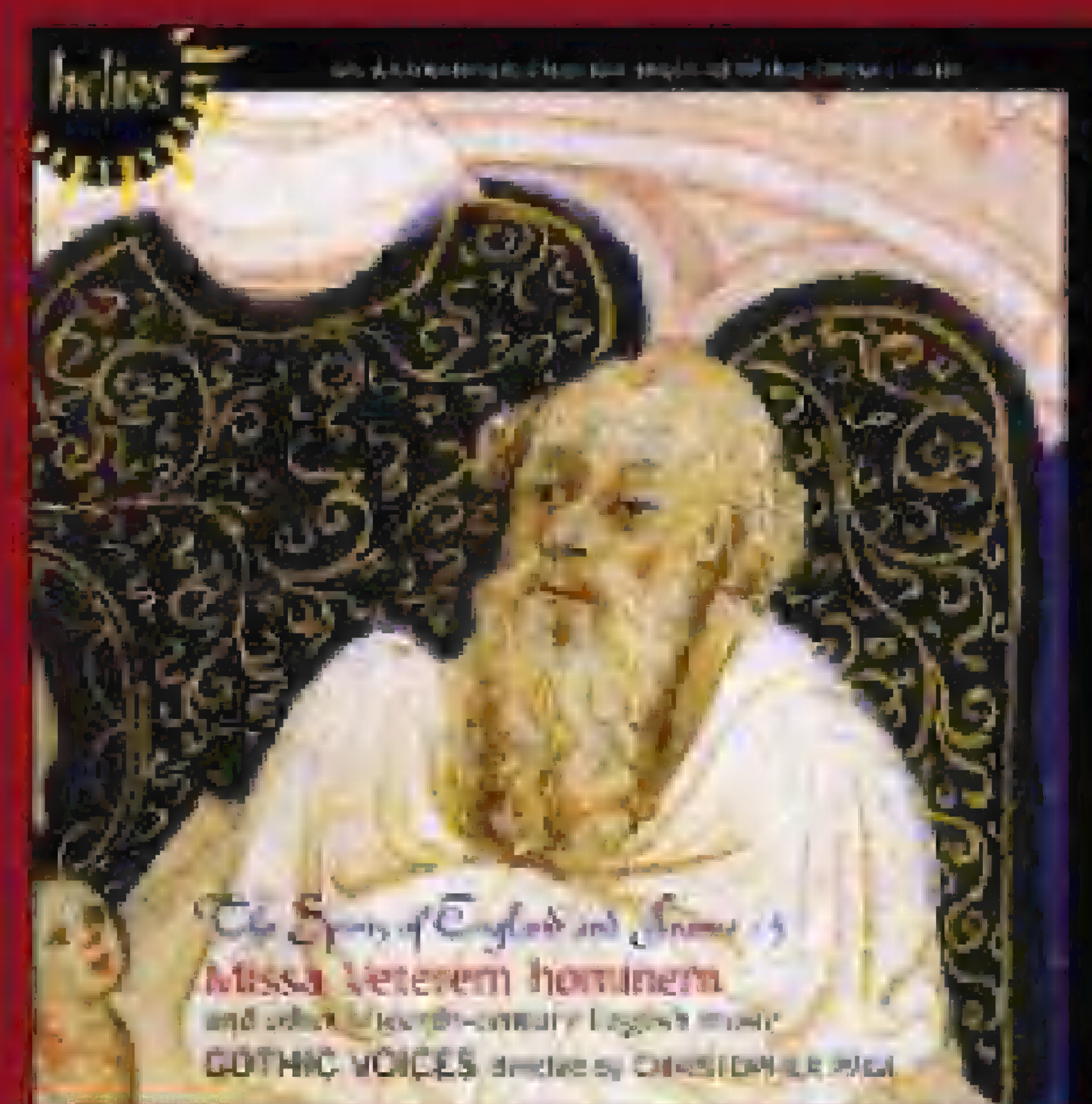


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ONE TO WATCH

Ray Chen

The winner of the Queen Elisabeth Competition makes his recording debut with Sony

Critics and journalists often fall back on adjectives such as “meteoric” to describe the career trajectory of the latest young star in the music firmament. In the case of violinist Ray Chen, however, few words more aptly describe the speed at which he has made a name for himself.

Winner of the Yehudi Menuhin Competition in 2008 and the Queen Elisabeth Competition the following year, he was snapped up by CAMI, the American mega-agency, and within weeks Sony Classical was begging him to sign an exclusive contract. The first fruits of that collaboration are about to be revealed, with the release of Chen's debut album, “Virtuoso”. “Here is a passionate, uninhibited account [of Franck's Violin Sonata]”, writes Duncan Druce in this issue, acclaiming Chen as a musician who “gives the impression that violin playing comes easily to him, even when the music is technically complex”. And *Gramophone* is not alone in its praise: Anne Midgette of the *Washington Post* avers that “he can do pretty much anything he wants on the violin”, while *The Strad's* critic knew he was “in the presence of something very special”.

Taiwanese-born, raised in Australia and trained at the Curtis Institute where he still studies with Aaron Rosand, Chen has much to look forward to. His performance diary is full up for the foreseeable future, both with recitals and concertos, and in April he will make his first recording with orchestra: the Tchaikovsky and Mendelssohn concertos (due out in 2012). Surely just another rung in the rise and rise of Ray Chen. ©

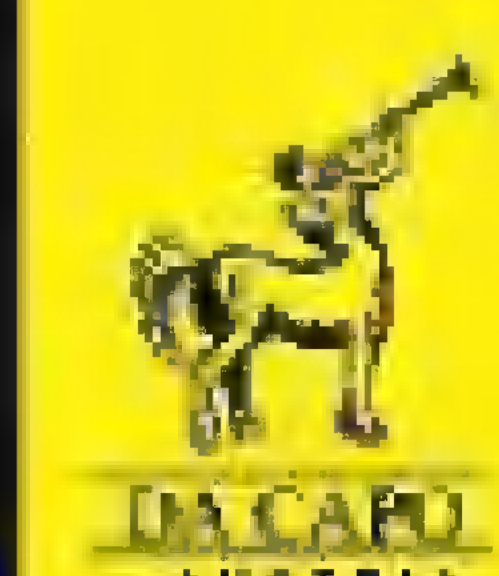
“Virtuoso” is reviewed on page 73



Name Ray Chen

Age 21

Plans Following the release of “Virtuoso” on January 17, he appears in recital in Berlin, Hamburg, Düsseldorf, Munich and Dresden. April sees performances with the Swedish Radio Orchestra, and summer engagements include the Ravinia and Verbier festivals.



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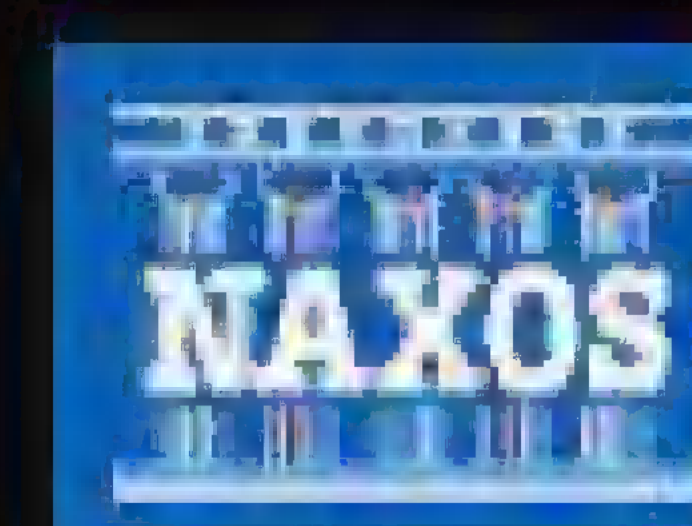
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Richard Eyre

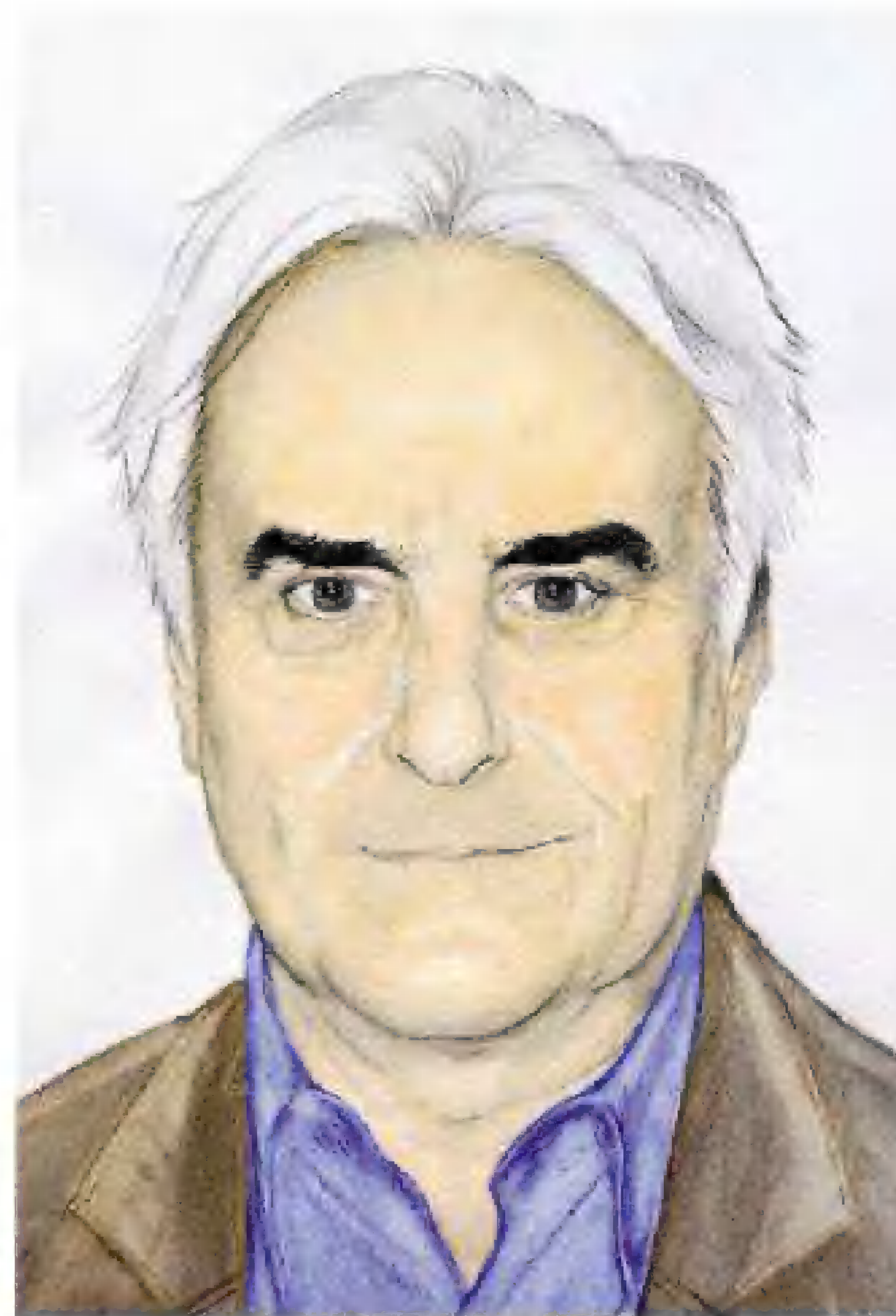
The pianos – and pianists – in my life

I have a Broadwood piano which sits in our kitchen. It's an upright with a solid cast iron frame, heavy and hugely strong and always the occasion of bitter comment from removal men. Their bitterness is never assuaged by being told that the piano has travelled to the Antarctic and back without being injured. There's a plaque on the front panel which reads:

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My grandfather was the First Lieutenant on the expedition and also the piano and harmonium player. I grew up surrounded by his Polar memorabilia: photos, letters, maps, drawings, watercolours, his goggles, his sealskin gloves, a walrus tooth, some model wooden penguins that he carved himself, the piano and the harmonium. He kept diaries in which he recorded that he played the piano most days and that *The Flying Dutchman* was a constant favourite – “a ripping piece with plenty of go”. Somewhere after the Equator the first sing-song was held in the Ward Room, with melancholy results: “Talent is wanting in the singing line...” and later “When we get away for good I must really take the men in hand and have some good sing songs.” There might have been some relief when the piano broke away from its moorings in a storm round the Cape of Good Hope but it was repaired when they put in at Cape Town. It survived its journey to the Antarctic and back, and its tone is still bright and rich.

That wasn't the only piano in my life. My malign and eccentric paternal grandfather lived in a large, bleak house in North Devon without electricity or running water which was a continent of fearful possibilities: dark labyrinthine panelled corridors, cellars, creaking floorboards, cupboards that were never opened, rooms that were forbidden territory – one of which was the light, airy and cheerful drawing room. In it was a grand piano that had been played by my grandmother. It was always locked. The third of the three pianos in my life was the only one that I could play. By deceit, of course: it was a player piano – self-playing and requiring only the large foot-pedals to be pressed in order to turn the piano rolls. I learnt to follow the keys roughly as they depressed and would appear to be accompanying myself in the rather limited repertoire available – the songs of Noël Coward and Ivor Novello, and Victorian parlour ballads. It's a constant and undiminishing disappointment now that I'm still unable to play the piano. I never learnt as a child – parental indifference coupled to my then wilful indolence. I taught myself to play the guitar later after



a (crude) fashion and now I read music haltingly, like a dyslexic child. If there were now one wish that I'd like to be granted – ahead of being able to speak French, Italian, Spanish, German and Russian fluently – it would be to be able to play the piano.

I dream sometimes that I'm a pianist and wake certain that my hands will find the notes with an easy familiarity, but reality takes over on the walk to the keyboard. Then my true musical life takes over from my imaginary one and I listen to recordings of many brilliant pianists with intense vicarious pleasure uncorrupted by equally intense envy. The pianists who populate my fantasies are the following, attached to the composers who I associate with them (ie whose recordings I own): Moiseiwitsch (Rachmaninov; the first pianist I heard play live), Moravec (Chopin and Mozart), Andsnes (Grieg), Horowitz

(Scriabin), Gilels (Brahms), Richter (Schumann), Gould (Bach), Hewitt (Bach), Ashkenazy (Shostakovich), Freire (Debussy), Rogé (Poulenc), Pollini (Beethoven, Chopin), Kissin (Beethoven, Chopin), Bolet (Liszt), Argerich (Liszt, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky), Zimerman (Ravel), Pletnev (Prokofiev), Brendel (Haydn, Schubert and Mozart), Uchida (Mozart), Rachmaninov (Rachmaninov), Schiff (Janáček) and Perahia (Haydn, Scarlatti, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn – everything he plays).

And then there are the no less great musicians, my favourite jazz pianists (notice the ubiquitous class distinction, no stand-alone surnames): Oscar Peterson, Duke Ellington, Bud Powell, Art Tatum, Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett, McCoy Tyner, Erroll Garner, Nat King Cole, Horace Silver, Wynton Kelly, Count Basie and Bill Evans.

Of these many pianists – all brilliant – two stand out for me: Murray Perahia and Bill Evans. Both have in common lyricism, intelligence, unostentatious virtuosity, perfect taste, passionate restraint and crystalline clarity. In short, they coincide exactly with the musical character and temperament that

live within my piano-playing fantasies. I have heard them both live only once – Bill Evans at Ronnie Scott's in 1965, sitting near the bandstand at the level of feet that were as expressive on the pedals as his hands on the keyboard, and Murray Perahia at Peggy Ashcroft's memorial service when he played (perfectly) a Mozart sonata.

I shook hands with him afterwards – somewhat less fulfilling in my fictional piano-playing life than the experience of the prodigiously talented musician, translator and director Jeremy Sams. He was playing jazz at a party when Murray Perahia tapped him on the shoulder. “I wish I could play like that,” he said. ☺

‘The piano survived its journey to the Antarctic’

Philip Kennicott

When grief is as engulfing as a tidal wave, Bach's Chaconne provides the only solace

In the other room my mom is dying. Underneath a great pile of sheets and coverlets, her once formidable presence is reduced to two hands and an ashen face, her breath laboured and her eyes remote and teary. She's almost gone, the nurses say, and everything that mattered about her – the voice, the temper, the delight in small things – has preceded her into nothingness.

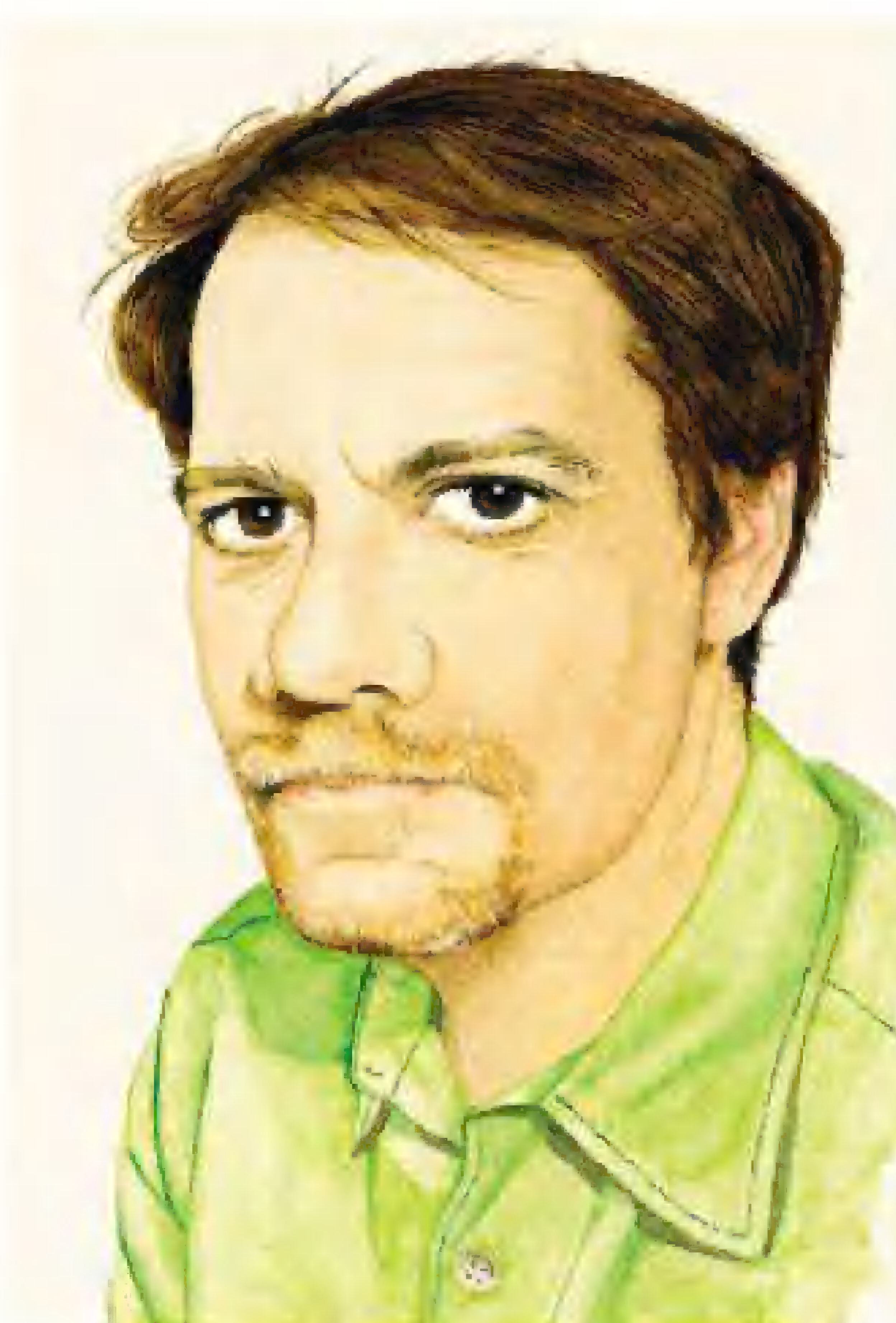
For the past few days, the only music I can tolerate is Bach's Chaconne in D minor for solo violin, the sprawling fantasy on a simple, descending theme that concludes the Partita No 2. Why does everything else seem so insipid, so irrelevant? There are other monumental works by Bach that might be pressed into service, the *Goldberg Variations*, the Cello Suites. But the former seem too busy, too much of the dance to serve a mind that is blank and listless. The latter, for some reason, feel exhausted to me, perhaps because I put them to work the last time the Grim Reaper called and now they sound hollowed out and dry.

There are some who believe the Chaconne was Bach's memorial to his first wife, but that speculation doesn't interest me at the moment. Music that is explicitly about death often seems trivial in the face of death itself. Manon dying ("Sola, perduta, abbandonata") feels false and overwrought. If anyone in the house made that kind of noise now, I'd show them the door. Bach's Chaconne may be a commanding sonic display, testing the limits of the instrument, but it also feels intimate and quiet.

I think in all of opera, the only death that feels remotely familiar is that of Prince Andrei, in Prokofiev's *War and Peace*. And it's not an accurate picture of death, but of suffering and the struggle during that last, liminal phase of life. Perhaps Parsifal's anguished cry upon learning from Kundry of the death of his mother has truth to it too, but it's a moment of truth in four hours of feverish fantasy that has nothing to do with the spirit of my family's house today.

My mother played the violin, so it's possible that's the reason the Chaconne is so vital at this moment. But she never played the violin the way Sergey Khachatryan plays it and she wasn't partial to Bach. It was Khachatryan's set of the Bach Partitas and Sonatas that I grabbed, in a vacant moment, thinking perhaps there'd be time to listen to something in the car or on the headphones during the hours or days – no one can ever tell you how long – of the vigil. And I'm glad I did.

Khachatryan will probably want to record these works again. And when he does, my guess is that he'll focus more intently on the contrapuntal character of the music, on the illusion of a chorus of violins summoned from a single instrument. But there is a lot to admire in



"There is, in fact, very little music that is as deep as life itself"

this young man's reading, which is surprisingly gentle and tender, always returning from grand gestures to a home place of sweetness. His *Adagio* from the Sonata No 3 begins far away, quiet and searching, a powerful layering of tentative ideas. He seems happiest in the slow movements – or am I most attuned to them? Certainly there's no slighting his technique, which is never taxed, even in the huge chords, skips and whirlwind figuration of the Chaconne.

Khachatryan's whispering *pianissimo* at the beginning of the middle section, in D major, breaks my heart. Bach built this piece in three parts, the middle turning to a major key. Khachatryan plays it as if delicately stroking a beloved face, or remembering a private, sustaining scene from childhood.

Some of the chemicals that modern medicine pours into ailing bodies result in, among other side effects, an increase in sensitivity to sounds. My mother, whose superhuman hearing enabled her to command the entire house, to detect from the depths of a deep sleep the sound of the refrigerator door opening, grew agitated and irritable at music that was too loud. Near the end of her life, she liked the "Méditation" from *Thaïs* and not

much else. I think I might have changed her mind about Bach if I had played her this passage from Khachatryan's performance. But that's one of the many things that death eliminates, the sharing of music.

It's easy to build too much philosophy into the music of Bach and the Chaconne, with its thrilling diversity built over what is one of the simplest descending motifs in music, is rich in metaphorical possibilities. As have many others over the almost 300 years of the life of this music, I hear mortality in its repeating line, a reminder of the inevitable trajectory of every life. And in everything else, the 63 variations built on top and around it, I hear life, variety and invention. All of life is here, including death, and in that D major passage which Khachatryan plays so eloquently, life and death come together into a single, acceptable, manageable fact of existence.

Grief renders one temporarily allergic to the silliness and banality of the world, the smiling weatherman with shiny teeth, the idiotic billboards advertising things people don't need, the pop songs and inane comedies and empty politicians spouting their populist gibberish. Most seasons of the year I am happy to hear Bach's Chaconne, but I don't search it out. For a time now, and I don't know how long, its main service is to provide a cocoon, shutting out the stupidity of the world. There is, in fact, very little music that is as deep as life itself, perhaps only a handful of pieces, which is why it is wise to reserve them for when they're needed. ☺



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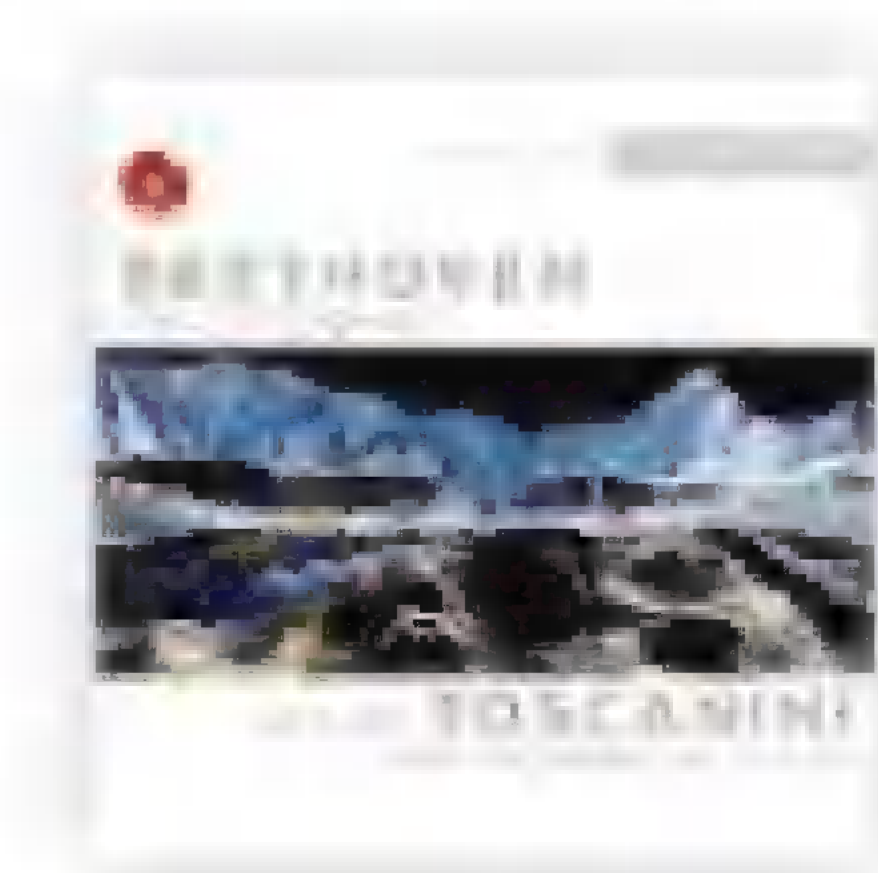
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THE TRIAL

Iconic recordings reassessed



On trial this month, **Beethoven's Symphony No 8** performed by the NBC Symphony Orchestra under Arturo Toscanini on November 10, 1952

PROSECUTION: PETER QUANTRILL

'He's too loud, for one thing. His recordings often suffer from boxy sound, but this is Carnegie Hall, not Studio 8-H'

The case against



Analyse humour and a pit opens beneath you. Discuss humour in music, the pit yawns wider and sharpened stakes rise from the depths. You may find slapstick and high comedy in Beethoven's Eighth Symphony, as Sir Donald Tovey and Antony Hopkins do, or you may agree with the conductor Michael Gielen (and me) that its humour "is

the humour of Rumpelstiltskin, full of wrath and repressed violence and without a hint of merriment". Either way, or any way, the Eighth abounds in a *Schadenfreude* of mischievous dislocation. Toscanini's performance does not.

I am a diffident prosecutor. Beethoven drives the form hard from start to finish and so does Toscanini. Here is a Classical symphony of perfectly classical if unorthodox proportions and Toscanini succeeds in his often-stated (and overstated) aim of giving us the notes much as Beethoven wrote them, no more and no less: no small achievement.

It is the even, unbending strength of his achievement that makes me uncomfortable. Listening to Furtwängler in Berlin, six months later, I marvel at the *Allegretto's* dialogue between strings and winds, *staccato* and *legato*, while knowing the piece could go another way. Will Toscanini not even yield for the ballistic compromise at 2'00"? No. Give me instead the jerky semaphore of his 1939 *Allegretto*: less metronomic, more like a joke about a metronome.

At bar 100 of the finale (1'30") uncertainty sets in as the violins and violas exchange the tonic F without going anywhere. Beethoven's asking a question but Toscanini already has all the answers. He's too loud, for one thing. His recordings often suffer from boxy sound, but this is Carnegie Hall, not Studio 8-H.

The *forte* is too high for the infrequent *fortissimo* markings to make their point of special insistence (at, say, the climax of the first movement's development, Beethoven's first use of *fff* in a symphony;

you'd never know it here), and the (much more frequent) *sforzandos* are hammer-blows, not rapier thrusts. In the *fugato* that follows the previous exchange of the tonic F, Toscanini makes perfect sense of what can and should be unsettling: the scatter-gun orchestration, the sly interjections. The trumpet's early entry in the Minuet (1'18" and 2'11") is as elegant and misplaced an acknowledgement of Classical rhetoric as the heavy *rallentando* for the Trio, where the basses somehow articulate their "wrong" accents as a complement to and not a subversion of the *gemütlich* wind tune.

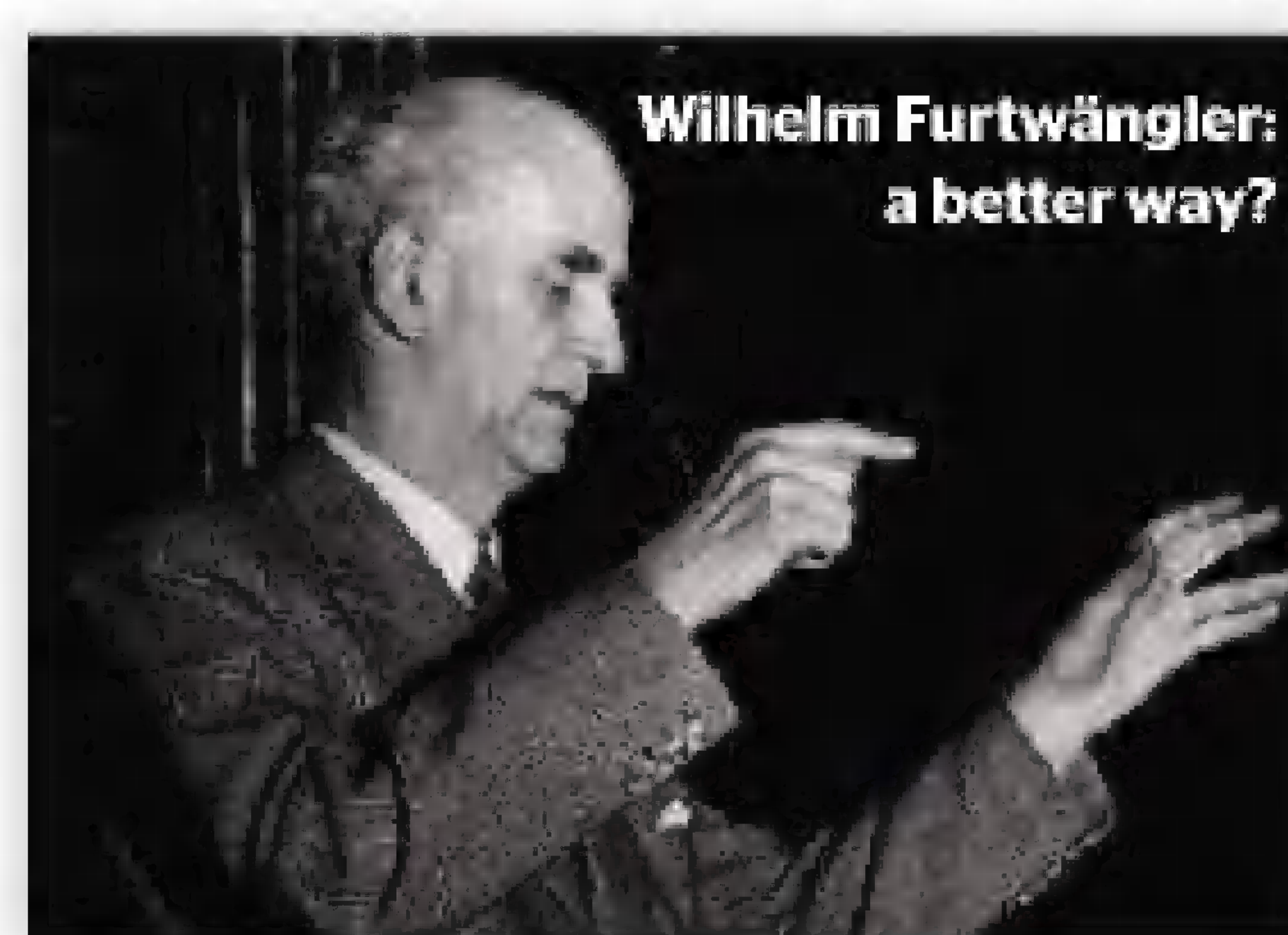
Such objections may seem no more than relativistic quibbles, or irrelevant to another time when the politics of interpretation prized

unity over discord. But I hear heterogeneous, disputing voices, and a Don Alfonso-like delight taken by the composer in the arrangement of their argument, and so do Hermann Scherchen and René Leibowitz in roughly contemporary accounts. For many reasons more social and political than musical (advanced by Joseph Horowitz in his book *Understanding Toscanini*), posterity's mark of influence passed them and their fellows by.

Toscanini bears the stamp; he threw down the gauntlet for the finale, but Karajan (1964) and Gardiner (1995) advance still more nearly upon Beethoven's apparently untameable metronome mark while respecting his *vivace* instruction. They hunt the beast but do not kill it.

Or rather, their musicians do. Here lies a deeper, older misgiving shared by some and scorned by many. I know about the fine musicians and big personalities in the NBC Orchestra, and I believe there are other, more amenable remasterings to be heard. Can you hear the NBC wind principals enjoying themselves, taking any kind of expressive liberty, in (say) the Trio? Does it matter? I think it does, if only because at no point does their playing smile. It is harassed to the end.

Peter Quantrill is an editor, broadcaster and writer on music, and a regular critic and feature writer for Gramophone (he has written cover stories on Herbert von Karajan, John Eliot Gardiner and Simon Rattle)



Our review from March 1954

"A rather good performance...not only vital, but considerably more sensitive [than its companion performance of the Fifth Symphony]." *(Malcolm MacDonald)*

Beethoven's Eighth Symphony, available as part of

"Beethoven: The Nine Symphonies" box-set

NBC Symphony Orchestra / Arturo Toscanini

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DEFENCE: DAVID GUTMAN

"Toscanini's conception is bold and seismic, refusing to treat the music as in any way "little"

The case for

The case for the defence is largely circumstantial but then none of us listens as objectively as we think we do. The reception of "popular" music on disc is often discussed in terms of placing and passive participation, the experience of being drawn into affective emotional alliances with performers and their audiences, or of tapping into memories of a

misspent youth. Western art music is meant to be different, signifying something more than a time capsule. Yet the presence of recorded music in all our lives has muddied the waters. It was Walter Benjamin who first asked not whether photography should be considered an art form but whether its invention had not transformed the entire nature of art.

A confession. I was brought up on Toscanini's Beethoven and, plainly, that makes me an unreliable witness.

Peter Quantrill is surely right to insist that Toscanini misses a joke or two but the old man's unwavering demand that a score be rendered cleanly, efficiently and *com'è scritto* is arguably the single most influential development in the history of modern orchestral performance. Curious then that his reputation should have declined. I contend that this says more about us than it does about him.

Heavily marketed as a high cultural archetype for the free world during the Second World War, his autocratic image first acquired negative connotations in the counter-cultural 1960s, a sense of unease reinforced by the dead-end revisionism of Joseph Horowitz's *Understanding Toscanini*. With maestro veneration dismissed as no more than a pop-cultural masquerade, we should not be surprised that only Leonard Bernstein had comparable success in engaging a mass audience for classical music in the developed West. That we feel a need to look to Venezuela or the Far East for their successors ought to shame us. Great music needs its heroes, the publicity and the sponsorship (private or public) they engender. "Gentlemen, be

democrats in life but aristocrats in art," instructed Toscanini. Much is said elsewhere about his tyrannical behaviour on the podium. Did it really lead only to heartless abstraction? What I hear is a peculiarly virile engagement, of a piece with the recent revelation that he conducted with fetishistic tokens from his mistress concealed about his person.

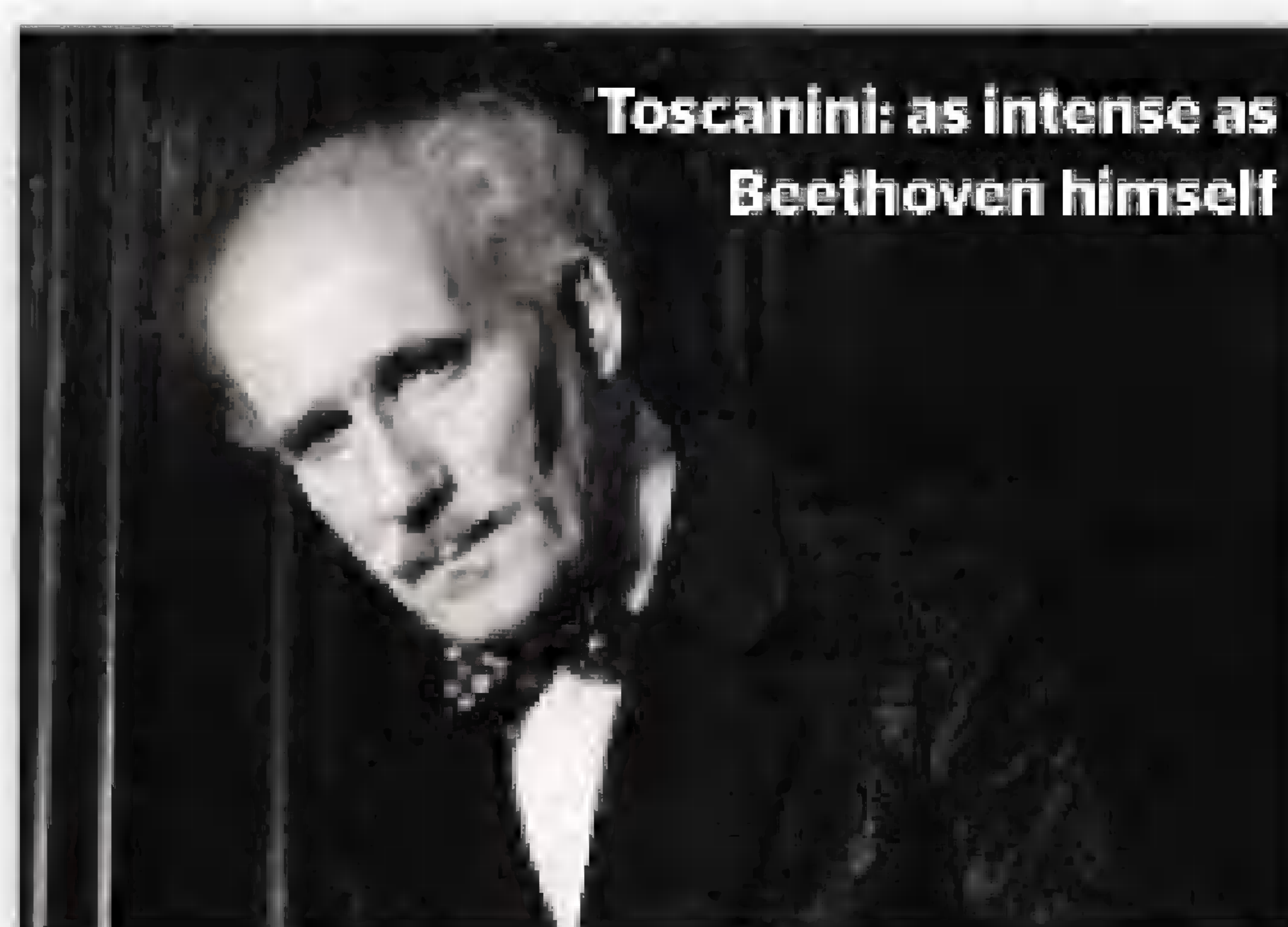
It was only when asked to speak up for the defence that I realised that it is Osmo Vänskä's Eighth (BIS, 9/06) to which I now return most frequently. His music-making has a subtler, more varied grain without sacrificing the cut and thrust of the argument and its underlying harmonic movement. Toscanini's conception is

comparably bold and seismic, refusing, as PQ knows, to treat the music as in any way "little". The exuberant opening movement and *sforzando*-packed finale unleash a cumulative power that seems to embarrass lesser conductors, while the inner movements, if decidedly short on charm (some wind solos are suitably puckish, others borne out of fear), are super-articulate and never leave you beached.

For Toscanini, Beethoven's *piano* markings

always indicated something fairly robust and his fierce *fortes* are undeniably raw: *Gramophone's* original review was more negative than PQ's, chiefly on sonic grounds.

How to sum up? A more neutral interpretative manner, fine for those who can play or read through a score for themselves, is not enough for the mass of listeners waiting to be re-engaged with the pinnacles of European art music through the power of a goal-directed singing line. Stylistic approaches will change over time but Toscanini's intensity, like Beethoven's, will not fade. Horowitz calls this recording "aberrantly militant". For me it is the uniquely high candle power which makes Toscanini – and Beethoven – so compelling. Those NBC cellos are wonderful. And I still think I heard a bassoonist smile... ●
David Gutman is a critic for Gramophone and has contributed to virtually every BBC Proms concert programme booklet since 1996



Toscanini: as intense as Beethoven himself

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BIOGRAPHY OF AN INSTRUMENT



Musical instruments are traditionally made out of wood, not Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene – but here's one that is, writes **David Threasher**

The Lego Harpsichord

Henry Lim seems every bit the Renaissance man. A musician (a multi-instrumentalist, in fact) and a composer of scores for student films and a handful of piano sonatas – classic sonata form is a particular obsession of his – he is also a photographer, serial blogger and Lego enthusiast. His website hosts photos of some of his Lego projects, including a bust of Beethoven, a stegosaurus three metres long and a re-creation of the gatefold photo of The Beatles' "Sgt Pepper" album. He's also created Lego likenesses of the eye-popping lithographs of MC Escher and, most ambitiously, created a full-size working harpsichord entirely out of Lego bricks – entirely, that is, except for the strings.

Lim's intention had been to build a piano but the internal tension involved put paid to that idea: "There's a reason why pianos have steel frames," he ruefully notes. So a harpsichord it was to be: "I was in my Bach phase anyways," he says.

The build took two years from drawing board to drawing room, with a number of prototypes along the way. The instrument was lent sturdiness by the use of larger bricks, and the curvature of the body was provided by turntables and roof pieces, while some of Lego's more recherché components came into use for the innards of the instrument. Rubber tyres were pressed into action to reduce the "clack" of the keys and jacks, while the dampers were fashioned from cloth capes as worn by minifigs (miniature figures) such as *Harry Potter's* Hermione Granger. Smooth-topped tile pieces lined the structure, as the bricks' nobbly studs would have had an adverse effect on the instrument's acoustic qualities. The smaller, flatter bricks were honed with a bandsaw to create the plectra.

Lego is a fairly heavy medium and the instrument's weight provides its strength. Nevertheless, says Lim, "During stringing, as I cranked the tuning pins, often I'd hear a disturbing creak in the corner...I spine-crackingly empathised with the literal tension". Eventually he had to double the thickness of the wrestplank: "So far, it's holding."

But what does it sound like? Lim's website not only gives a detailed history of the Lego Harpsichord's construction, along with a fascinating pictorial record, but also links to an MP3 file of the opening Aria of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. Let's be frank, you're not going to want to hear the ensuing 30 variations, but it's recognisably Bach – as you may never have heard him played before. ●

QUIZ

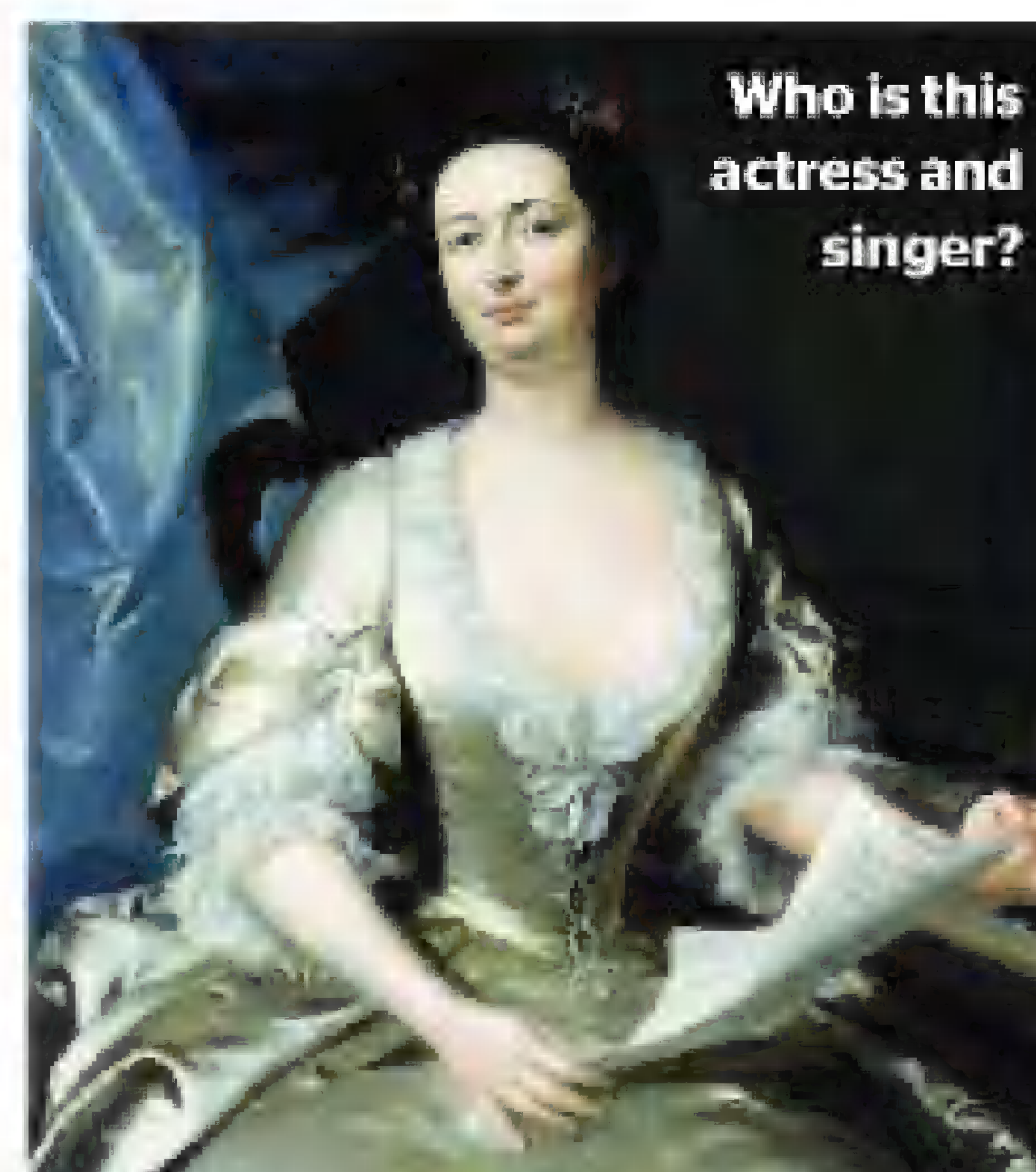
Who am I?

Pit your wits against Gramophone

I am an actress and singer of the 18th century. My Irish father was a member of the French army under Louis XIV but I was born in London. I took my barrister husband's surname, under which I became best known professionally, even though our marriage did not last long.

I was a member, variously, of the Drury Lane and Covent Garden companies and was a founder member of David Garrick's acting company. As an actor I played many Shakespeare roles, as well as "singing chambermaid" parts in comedies.

I used to sing between the acts of plays and the greatest composer active in London at the time wrote a number of songs for me. I acquired quite a reputation in ballad opera and sang in the premiere of a masque that contains one of England's favourite patriotic numbers.



Who is this actress and singer?

Charles Burney remarked on my singing that it was "intolerable when she meant it to be fine, in ballad farces and songs of humour [it] was... everything it should be".

Nevertheless, I sang in London's famous oratorio seasons and in a number of the finest English operas of the day. I lived on Horace Walpole's estate at Little Strawberry Hill near Twickenham, where I died in 1785.



Horace Walpole's estate at Strawberry Hill



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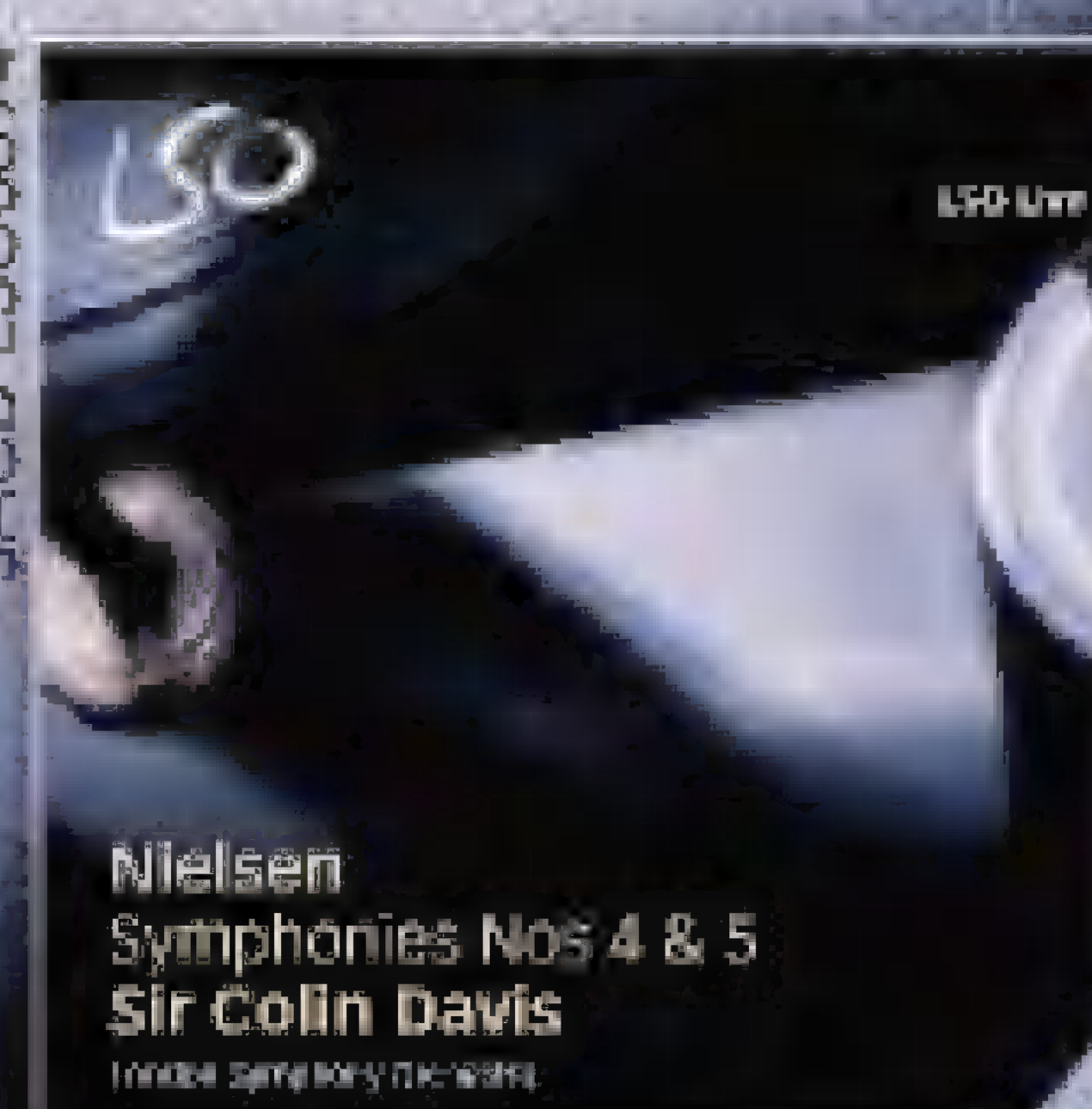
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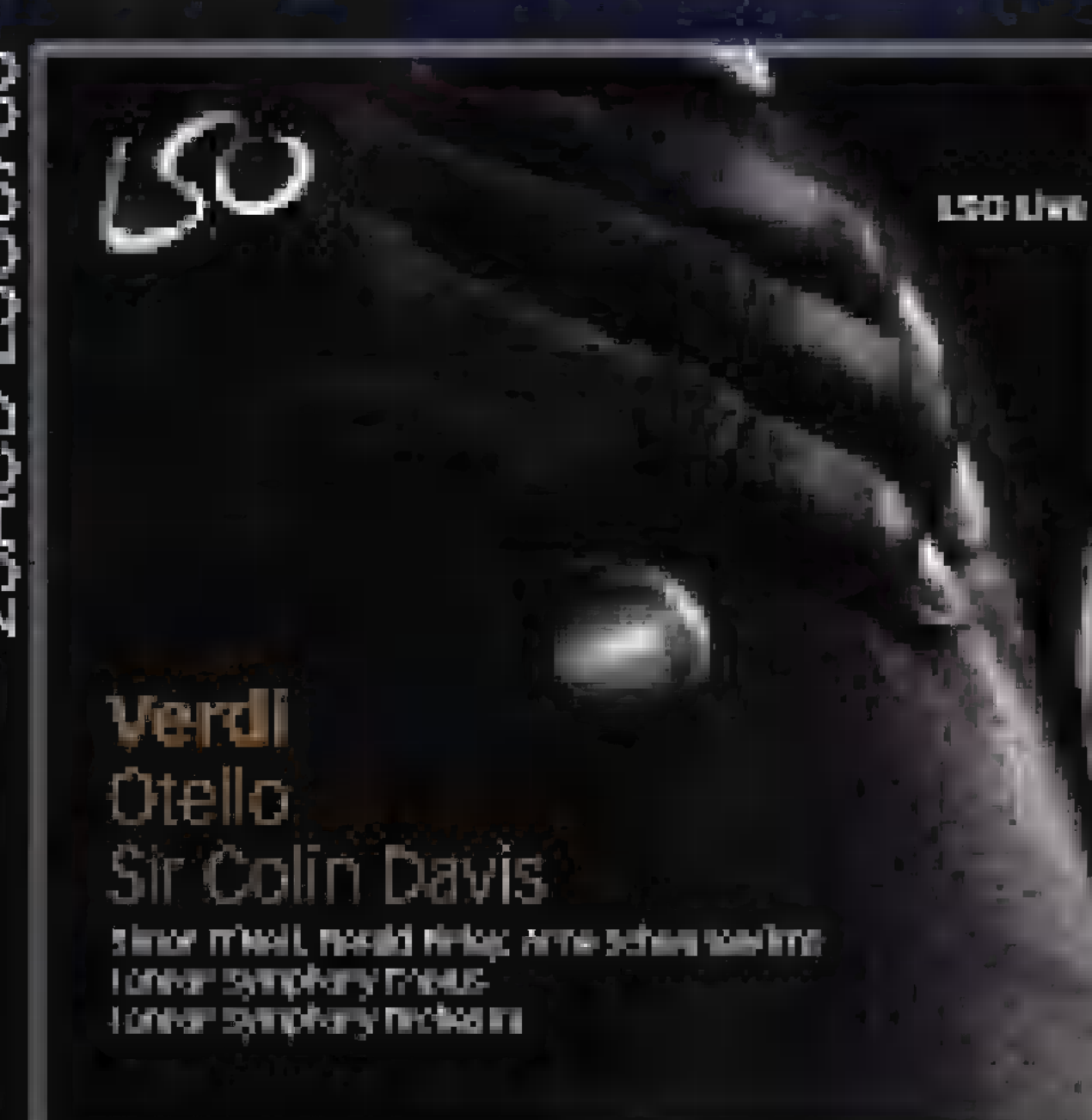
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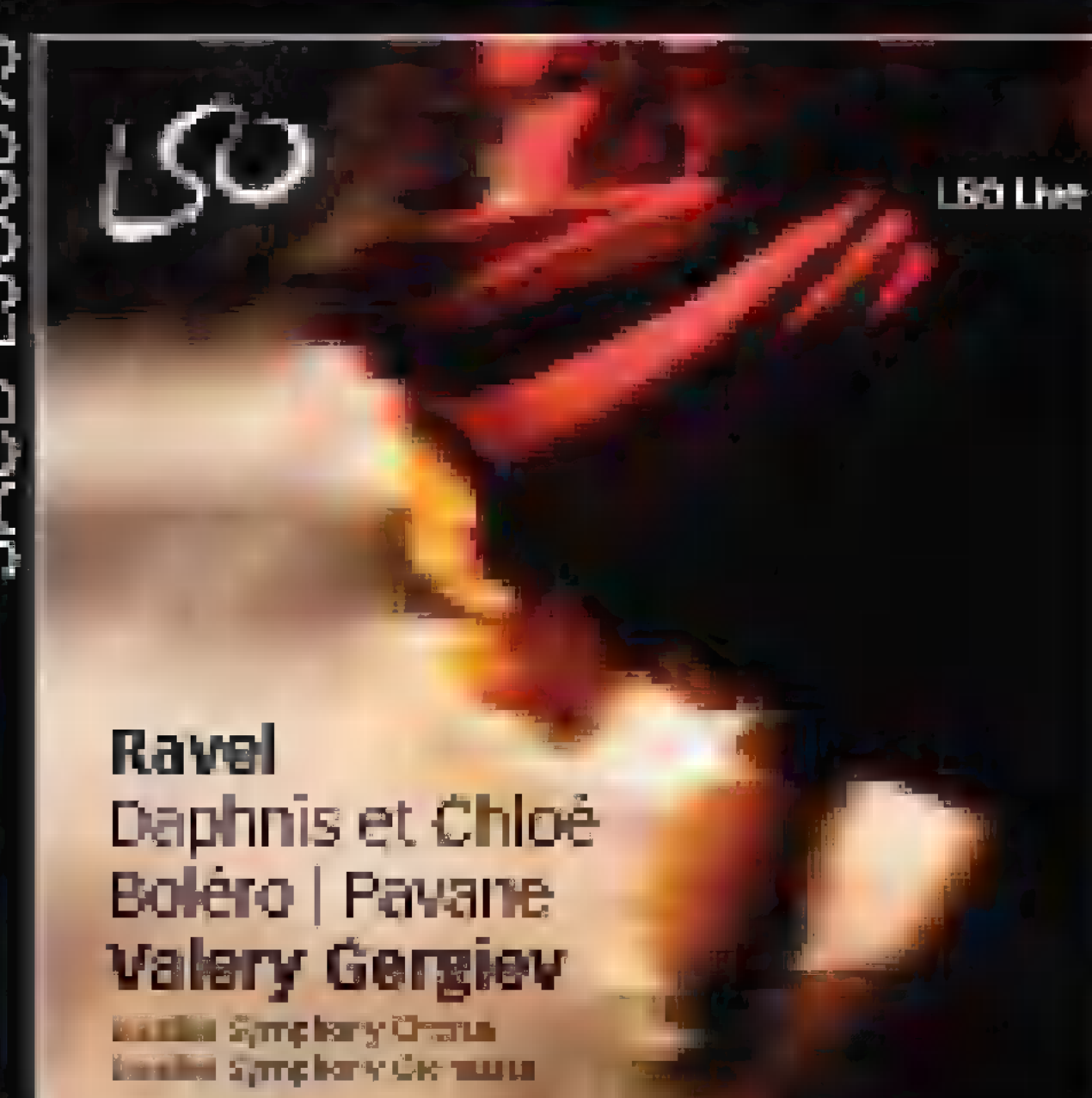
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Gerald Finley

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BBC Music Magazine (UK)

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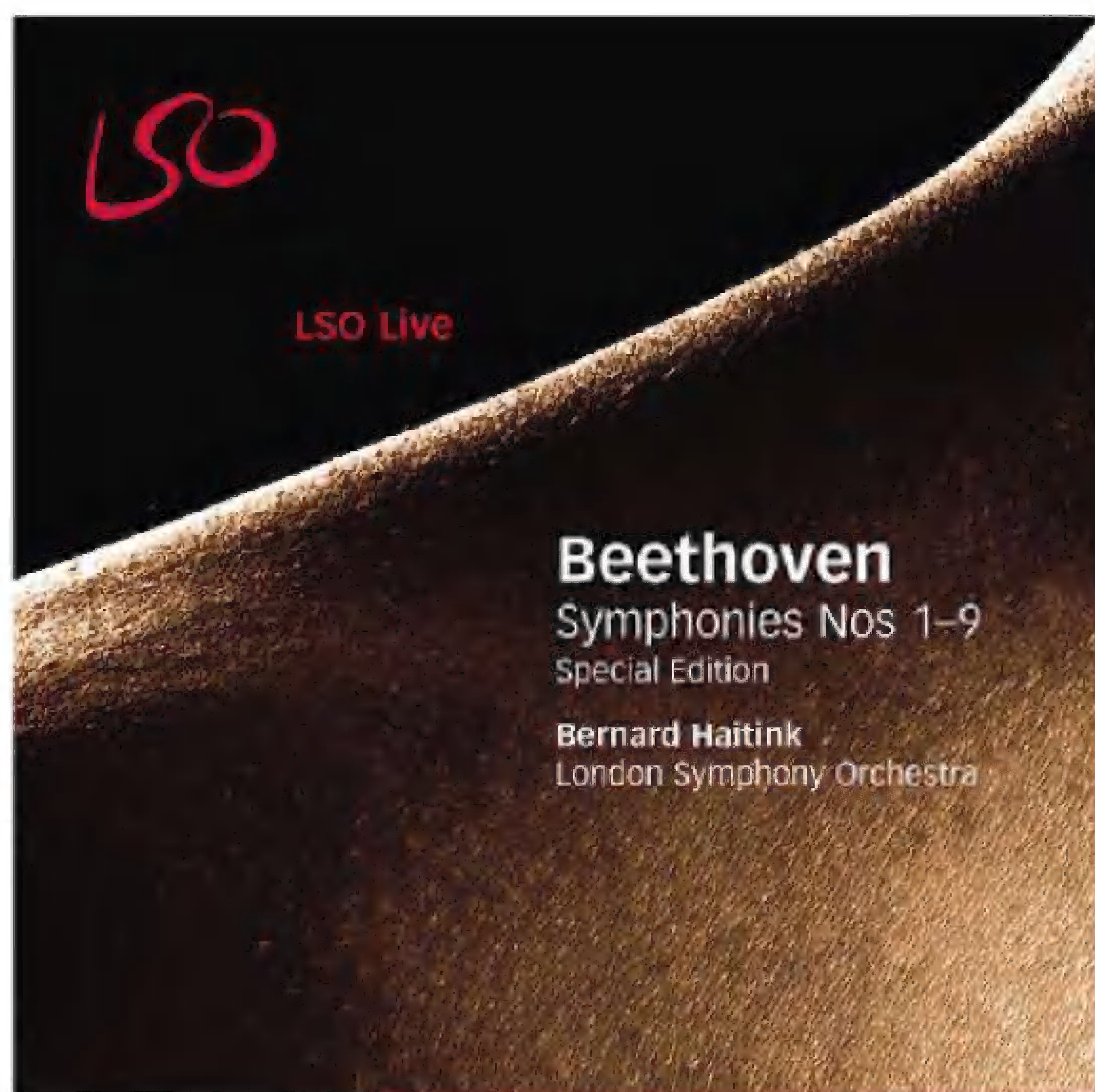
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LOVING LISZT

Liszt's virtuosity, charisma and devastating good looks always counted against him. In his bicentenary year, we should look beyond the surface to understand the man and his music, says **Jeremy Nicholas**

Were one looking for a yardstick by which to identify someone's musical tastes, few composers fulfil the function better than Franz Liszt. You either get him or you don't.

His music is to love or to loathe. A few years ago, while compiling a list of the 50 greatest composers for a book, my erudite and music-loving publisher balked at the inclusion of Liszt. "Liszt?" he moaned. "What about Tallis and Victoria and Schütz? Far more important!" He did have the grace to admit that he didn't know much about Liszt the man, and that he had not heard a great deal of his music. His perception was based on a handful of what he characterised as "flashy" works – and they had not appealed to his refined sensibilities. My publisher's allergy, I have found, is not uncommon.

On the other side of the fence, those of us who worship at the shrine look on non-believers with the same degree of pity that a doctor reserves for a geriatric with incurable arthritis: we'd like to help but there's nothing we can do. Ignorance and preconceptions are frequent symptoms of Lisztophobia. My publisher's affliction was cured, in part, by sending him some representative CDs of some of the best Liszt from all genres in top-class performances. He claimed to be, as a result, if not a convert then at least surprised by the variety and quality of the music, and at how much he had enjoyed these discoveries.

This simple course of treatment merely disabused my friend regarding Liszt's music (to which we shall come in a moment), but there is much more to Liszt than "just" Liszt the composer. He is a significant figure in several other areas of musical endeavour, and a complex, contradictory one at that, making him an endlessly fascinating subject for musicologist and biographer.

He was born on October 22, 1811, at Raiding, near Ödenberg, Hungary (now in Austria). His father, an excellent musician, was a minor court functionary in the service of the Esterházy family, the same aristocrats who, a few years earlier, had employed Haydn. In fact, had Liszt been born two years earlier, his lifespan would have overlapped with both Haydn and Stravinsky, neatly mirroring the span of the musical bridge he represents, taking in as it does (and indeed exemplifying) the whole of

Liszt and his (mainly female) admirers: a cartoon of 1842 by Adolf Brennglass





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the Romantic movement and the yet unformulated worlds of Impressionism, atonality and dissonance.

The young Liszt was a keyboard wunderkind. At the age of nine he played Ries's Piano Concerto in E flat, Op 42, in public and extemporised on themes submitted by the audience. He studied with Czerny who, however, refused to accept any payment, such was the pleasure of teaching him. Salieri trained him in composition; Beethoven is said to have bestowed his blessing on the boy by publicly kissing his brow ("Devil of a fellow! Such a young rascal!"). By his mid-teens, Liszt was established as one of the foremost living pianists. Many years later, by which time he was one of the most famous men in Europe, he was having his portrait painted by the French artist Ary Scheffer. Liszt took a pose that "assumed an air of inspiration". "The devil, Liszt!" exclaimed Scheffer. "Don't put on the airs of a man of genius with me. You know well enough that I am not fooled by it." And what was Liszt's reply? There was silence for a moment. "You are right, my dear friend. But pardon me. You do not know how it spoils one to have been an infant prodigy."

Liszt's pianistic gifts and the electrifying effect his playing had on listeners have been widely documented. He was a phenomenal sight-reader: "Liszt," wrote the despairing Clara Schumann, "played at sight what we toil over and at the end get nowhere with." When she first heard him, she broke down and sobbed. Grieg described how Liszt sight-read the manuscript of his Piano Concerto. "Not content with playing, he at the same time converses and makes comments, addressing a bright remark now to one, now to another..." He invented the concept of the solo piano recital. Helped by a charismatic stage presence and a flair for showmanship, he could whip up an audience into a state of frenzy. Ladies were known to have flung jewels on the stage instead of bouquets; sometimes they fainted. There were unkind rumours that they were paid to do so. Only Paganini had produced such an effect on an audience, and Liszt had the advantage of striking good looks.

His dalliances were the talk of Europe. He had at least 26 major love affairs and fathered several illegitimate children. Chief among his amours were the Comtesse Marie d'Agoult and Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein, both of whom left their husbands to live with him. Having spent nearly two decades as a travelling virtuoso and amassing a fortune on the way, Liszt abandoned life on the road. After 1847 he never again appeared in public as a paid artist, though he continued giving concerts, mainly for charity. Invited to become Kapellmeister in Weimar, he re-established the city as a major cultural centre once more. In the years spent there, between 1848 and 1859, he conducted symphonic works and operas, both of the standard literature and those of his contemporaries. These included the first German performances of many of Berlioz's works, a revival of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and the world premiere of *Lobengrin* – two operas by a political revolutionary then sought by the authorities, a man who would soon become his son-in-law.

It was also during this period that he composed (or revised) the bulk of his music, much of it pioneering and original in form and content. The amount he produced was quite staggering: 12 symphonic poems (*Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*, *Tasso*, *Les préludes*, *Orpheus*, *Prometheus*, *Mazeppa*, *Festklänge*, *Heroïde funèbre*, *Hungaria*, *Hamlet*, *Hunnenschlacht* and *Die Ideale*), *Années de pèlerinage* Books 1 and 2, the *Rhapsodies hongroises*, the *Grandes Etudes de Paganini*, the *Etudes d'exécution transcendante* and the *Harmonies poétiques et*



Beethoven embracing Liszt at the latter's concert of 1823

religieuses, the *Faust* and *Dante* symphonies, the two piano concertos, *Totentanz*, the B minor Sonata...the list is a long one: if you count every version for every instrument, the complete catalogue of Liszt's works amounts to about 3000 individual pieces. Not all of it is equally good – that could hardly be expected of any composer writing over a period of 60 years – but the proportion that is regularly played and recorded today is probably the smallest of any major composer. Little of his vocal or church music, such as the orchestral *Missa solennis* and the two Psalms with orchestra, features in the repertoire of today's artists; barely a handful of his considerable body of organ music, such as the mighty Fantasy and Fugue on Meyerbeer's *Ad nos, ad salutarem undam*, is ever heard. There is nothing like an anniversary year to put that right.

Towards the end of Liszt's life he was replying to over 2000 letters a year. In addition to all this, piano students flocked to him from all over the world. Among them were the greatest pianists of the 19th and early 20th centuries: Tausig, Reubke, d'Albert, Rosenthal, Lamond, de Greef and von Sauer among them. Besides Wagner and Grieg, already mentioned, he influenced, directly or indirectly, the careers of Borodin, Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, MacDowell, Smetana, Debussy, Saint-Saëns, Fauré and Brahms. All of them benefited from his advice and wisdom.

'His dalliances were the talk of Europe – he had at least 26 major love affairs and fathered several illegitimate children'

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Thomas Trotter *org*

Decca (F) 440 283-2DH

Played on the huge 1855 organ of Merseburg Cathedral, Trotter's programme features four of Liszt's organ masterpieces, including the Gothic *Ad nos* Fantasia and Fugue.

even more important. The music of Mahler, Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich and Richard Strauss would not be as it is if Liszt had not written orchestral works. Yet while many people's symphonic poems get played and recorded, Liszt's are very badly served. His Masses and oratorios scarcely get done at all. I don't know why. *Christus*, I think, is arguably his greatest work."

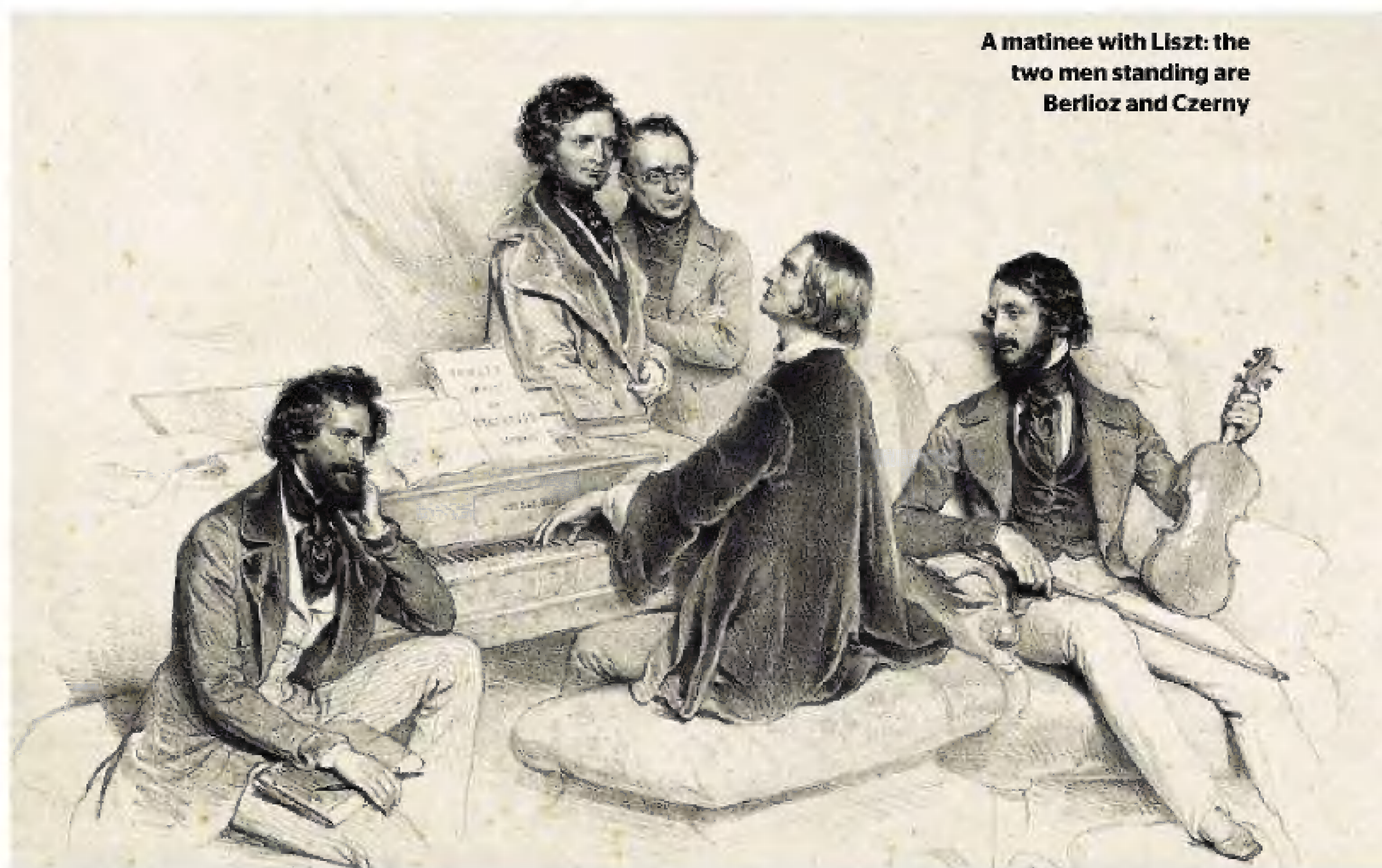
Howard is equally in no doubt about Liszt's stature as a man. "He was the most photographed man of the 19th century and the most sculpted man after Napoleon. He had a social way with him that won the hearts of those who knew him personally. None of those who spoke ill of him ever did so to his face because his personality was very powerful. There was no door of any court or state in Europe that Liszt couldn't walk through. You can't say that of any other composer of the time. Imagine if Wagner had tried to ingratiate himself with Pope Pius IX!"

Yet what are these missiles flying through the air labelled "charlatan", "self-promoter", "superficial"? Here is the critic Eduard Hanslick in 1874: "The main objection against Liszt is that he imposes a much bigger – and abusive – mission on the subject of his work: namely either to fill the gap left by the absence of musical content or to justify the atrociousness of such content as there is." Hanslick detested him. "After Liszt, Mozart is like a soft spring breeze penetrating a room reeking of fumes." The English critics were not to be outdone. Frederick Corder, a composer himself who prepared the English editions of Wagner's operas, wrote: "Liszt's themes stick out like almonds in a Dundee cake: they fail to cohere" (whatever was he listening with?), while the pious principal of the Royal Academy of Music, Sir George Macfarren, declared that "Liszt was working a great evil upon music".

Germany, the critic James Huneker observed, set the fashion for abusing Liszt. "He had too much success for one man, and as a composer he must be made an example of... In Germany he was abused as a Magyar, in Hungary for his Teutonic tendencies, in Paris for not being French-born [...] Germany refused to see Liszt except as an ex-piano virtuoso with the morals of a fly and a perverter of art. Even the piquant triangle in his piano concerto was suspected as possibly suggesting the usual situation of a French comedy." Howard agrees: "It was jealousy. They couldn't bear the bounties that God had bestowed

How did he do it all? Music simply poured out of him. Inspiration, the creative urge, is one thing, and the physical, time-consuming labour of producing a score another (true, he had help from the likes of Raff in orchestrating certain works), but simultaneously to invent new forms (the symphonic poem), develop others (B minor Sonata), and experiment with harmonic language as well as undertaking all the other activities listed above – well, "remarkable" seems a barely adequate description.

Leslie Howard, president of the Liszt Society, whose recording of the complete piano works is likely to remain a unique achievement (over 120 hours of music on nearly 100 CDs), is keen to emphasise Liszt's place in musical history. "Any composer worth twopence knows that by the middle of the 1850s Liszt had already worked out ways in which tonality could be subverted. He'd already invented the 12-note row and used the whole-tone scale many times, the first time in the *Grande Fantaisie sur La clochette* which he wrote in 1831 when he was 19. Every composer in the 19th century acquired Liszt's music in order to learn things from it. Marvellous as his piano music is, the rest of his output is, in many ways,



A matinee with Liszt: the two men standing are Berlioz and Czerny

'He's very often played by musicians who shouldn't be held in high esteem'

upon him. He was handsome – which is more than you can say for almost all the others – he made a fortune when he was very young and which effectively allowed him to retire from performing so that he could do what he wanted to do as a composer. And it gave him the financial freedom to help all these other musicians, including many of the people who gave him a hard time behind his back. The idea that he was some kind of charlatan is a hare that simply won't run. One of the reasons why Liszt is not held in the highest esteem is that he's very often played by musicians who shouldn't be held in the highest esteem. They play Liszt as though it's some kind of cheap trick – and when you play it like a cheap trick, it sounds like a cheap trick. You can make Liszt sound like muck – and I don't think that's his fault. If you played a Beethoven sonata with the same carelessness with which most people approach Liszt, you'd get run out of town on a rail."

One of today's finest young Liszt players is Czech pianist Libor Novacek. He, too, is concerned at how frequently Liszt's music is considered as flashy virtuoso material and often used as a means for showing off one's technique. "To me this music is much more – it has a very special aura and wonderful depictive qualities for which technique should only serve as a tool to reach the music beyond. Liszt, contrary to his legendary reputation, was a very inspired and sensitive man who embedded in his music his own personal conflict between earthly passion and godly virtue. This is why we find such different styles and qualities in his writing, from the flashy *Hungarian Rhapsodies* and Paganini transcriptions to the epic works such as the Sonata in B minor. My little

quest as a musician is to persuade the audience to always look beyond the surface of his music and show them the beauty and poetry that his works possess." Novacek's recordings of the first two books of *Années de pèlerinage* are eloquent examples of practising what you preach.

Howard elaborates: "One of the problems is that Liszt is associated with virtuosity, a word derived from the concept of virtue. Once you get to the 19th century, there's an absolute inbuilt distrust of anyone who has any technical facility. They say 'Oh, he can't be much of a musician – it's all technique'. Nobody writes music to be impossibly difficult just for the merry hell of it. People write within the limits of what they are able to do. Liszt's works, like Paganini's for the violin, are never, ever sold at less than the right price for their musical value. There was always a musical reason for Liszt's virtuosity. This is a composer who, if you take him seriously, benefits everybody. If he had not written a note of piano music I would still stay that. I think it's a great shame that his reputation has somehow been harnessed to piano players – because you can't trust most of them!"

Liszt's final years produced a body of work much of which remains virtually unknown, like the unfinished oratorio *St Stanislaus, Via Crucis* (his setting of the Stations of the Cross) and a final symphonic poem,

Liszt live

Expect global Liszt-mania this year. Bayreuth will be temporarily swapping loyalties for the year-long "Desire for Liszt" festival, with Thomas Hampson, Lang Lang and Christian Thielemann.

Liszt marathons include Louis Lortie's traversal of the complete *Années de pèlerinage*, which he'll be

bringing to Lincoln Center, New York, on March 10. And Evgeny Kissin gives an all-Liszt recital at Barbican Hall in London on February 13.

Everyone will be at it on the official World Liszt Day, October 22, when the Hungarian Music Council has called for vast numbers of performances of Liszt's oratorio *Christus*.

In the studio for Liszt year

Don't expect the sheer volume of work that Handel's and Mahler's anniversaries have brought us – but there will still be plenty to enjoy, including some delectable rarities.

Liszt's songs get several new outings. Hyperion has already launched its song series, with more volumes to follow. Meanwhile, on Virgin, soprano Diana Damrau will release her own collection in October.

EMI issues Liszt's *A Faust Symphony* conducted by Riccardo Muti in July. Meanwhile, the complete symphonic poems and other orchestral works are being recorded on period instruments by Martin

Haselböck and the Orchester Wiener Akademie for NCA.

Two of Sony's new piano signings will be bringing out Liszt albums. Hotly tipped Georgian Khatia Buniatishvili is followed by Lang Lang's Liszt traversal. But first, coinciding with various live appearances, Chandos pianist Louis Lortie releases a two-disc set of the *Années de pèlerinage* in March.

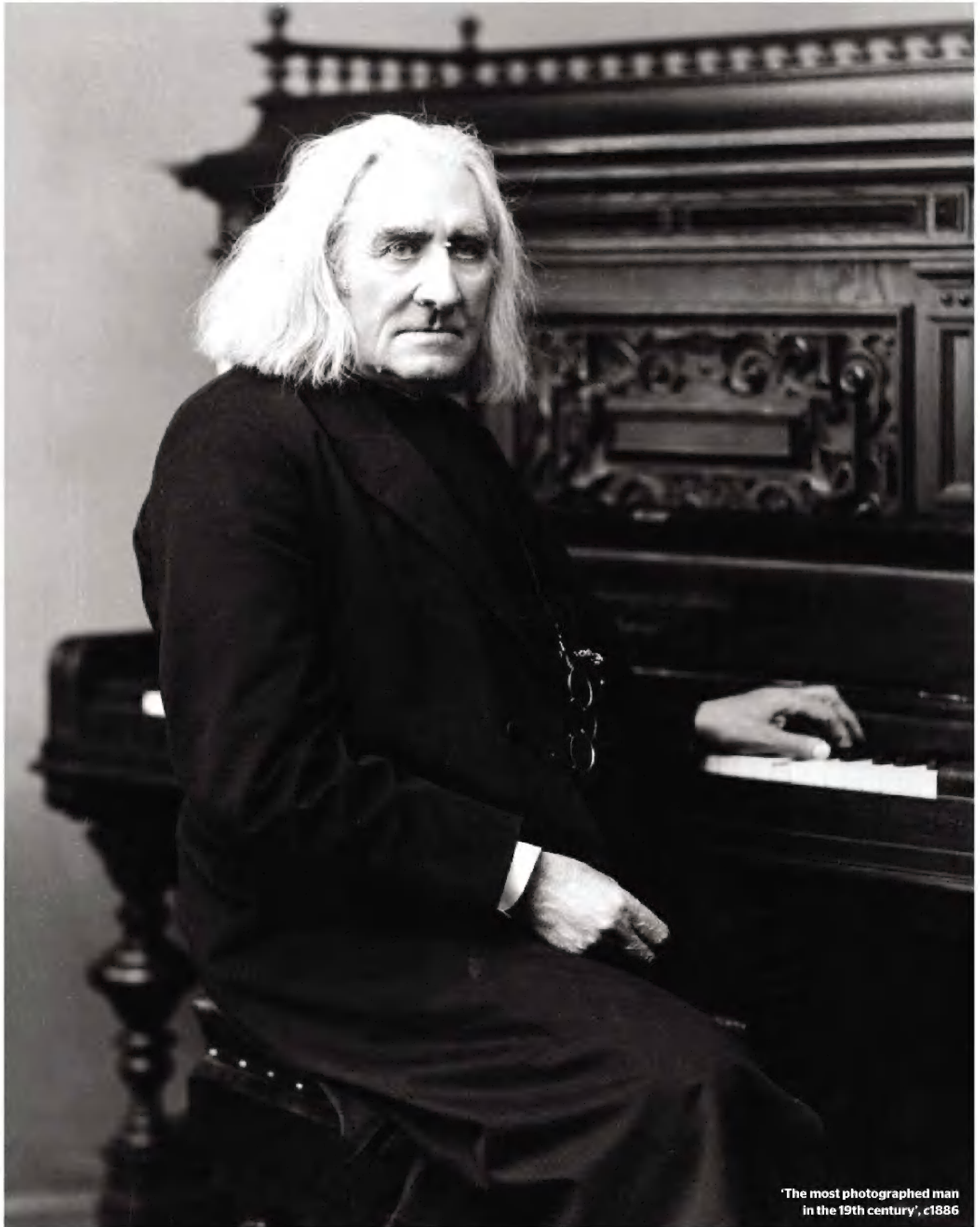
Elsewhere, there will be Liszt chamber music on Harmonia Mundi from the members of the Trio Wanderer, and more chamber works from the Pražák Quartet on Praga Digitals.

And, of course, there will be the bumper anniversary boxes. Fifteen CDs from EMI, anyone? That's due out in July!

From the Cradle to the Grave. It was only in the 1950s that his late piano works began to be taken up, works such as the third book of the *Années de pèlerinage*, *Nuages gris*, the *Valses oubliées*, the three *Csárdás*, *La lugubre gondola*, *RW-Venezia* and *Am Grabe Richard Wagners* (these last three works relating to the death of Wagner) and the *Bagatelle sans tonalité*. Now they are seen as no less than Liszt's signposts for the future of Western classical music after his death.

The Liszt who people knew in Weimar, Rome and Budapest (after 1871 he divided his time between all three) could be as arrogant and vain at times as he was humble and self-effacing at others; a Casanova who took minor orders in the Catholic Church to become an abbé; a lover of luxury and the adulation of the public, at other times a profoundly spiritual recluse: "The noble priest, the circus-rider, neo-classical and vagabond, a mixture in equal doses of real and false nobility" (Romain Rolland in *Jean-Christophe*). A writer, reformer of church music, orchestra trainer, conductor, pianist without equal, "captain of the new German music" (Huneker), selfless and generous to a fault. Alfred Brendel said somewhere that there was no composer he would rather meet. I go along with that. Chances are we'd find ourselves agreeing with one of Liszt's greatest pupils. Towards the end of his long life, Moriz Rosenthal (who died in 1946) confided: "Liszt was more wonderful than any person I have ever known."

Let us not talk of him merely as a great composer and musician. Let us celebrate Liszt as one of the seminal figures of the 19th century. ☉



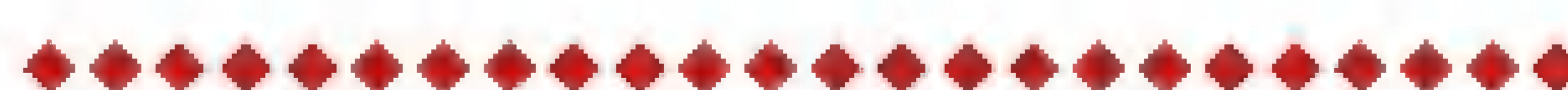
'The most photographed man
in the 19th century', c1886

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Kids in college

Nurturing the talent of a musical child is not easy.
Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, Royal Academy of Music
 principal, reports on the special role junior colleges play



What do you do when you find that a child shows signs of exceptional music ability? How can you take it further?

Schools, music centres and private teachers deliver the goods up and down the country, often with spectacular results. But – and it’s a pretty huge “but” – it depends on the school, the accessibility of good teaching and the value a particular council (and community) attaches to music, as to whether it’s really enough for those with promise.

Musical education should be offered in a variety of environments. For some, the specialist music school is the answer: a general secondary education strongly flavoured with intensive musical teaching, such as is offered at Chetham’s, the Purcell School, St Mary’s in Edinburgh, the Yehudi Menuhin School and Wells Cathedral School, for example.

An additional and important dimension, however, is the teaching experience offered by the junior music departments of UK conservatoires. These are increasingly vibrant and burgeoning communities of young people who head for city centres on a Saturday to work in one-to-one lessons and many collaborative contexts – they are places dedicated to harnessing musical skills, nurturing creativity over and above the curriculum “norm” and instilling values of lifelong musical endeavour, be they professional or otherwise.

Many of our leading musicians, and not just classical artists, started their serious music study in one of these Saturday “schools”. Sir Elton John is an alumnus of the junior department at the Royal Academy of Music and he often mentions in the press that the solid classical training he received there was key to his success, recognising also how he met many future friends and professional colleagues during this time. Similar stories can be told of junior departments in Birmingham, Manchester, Cardiff, Glasgow and those serving London at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Trinity Laban and the Royal College of Music, as well as the more recent

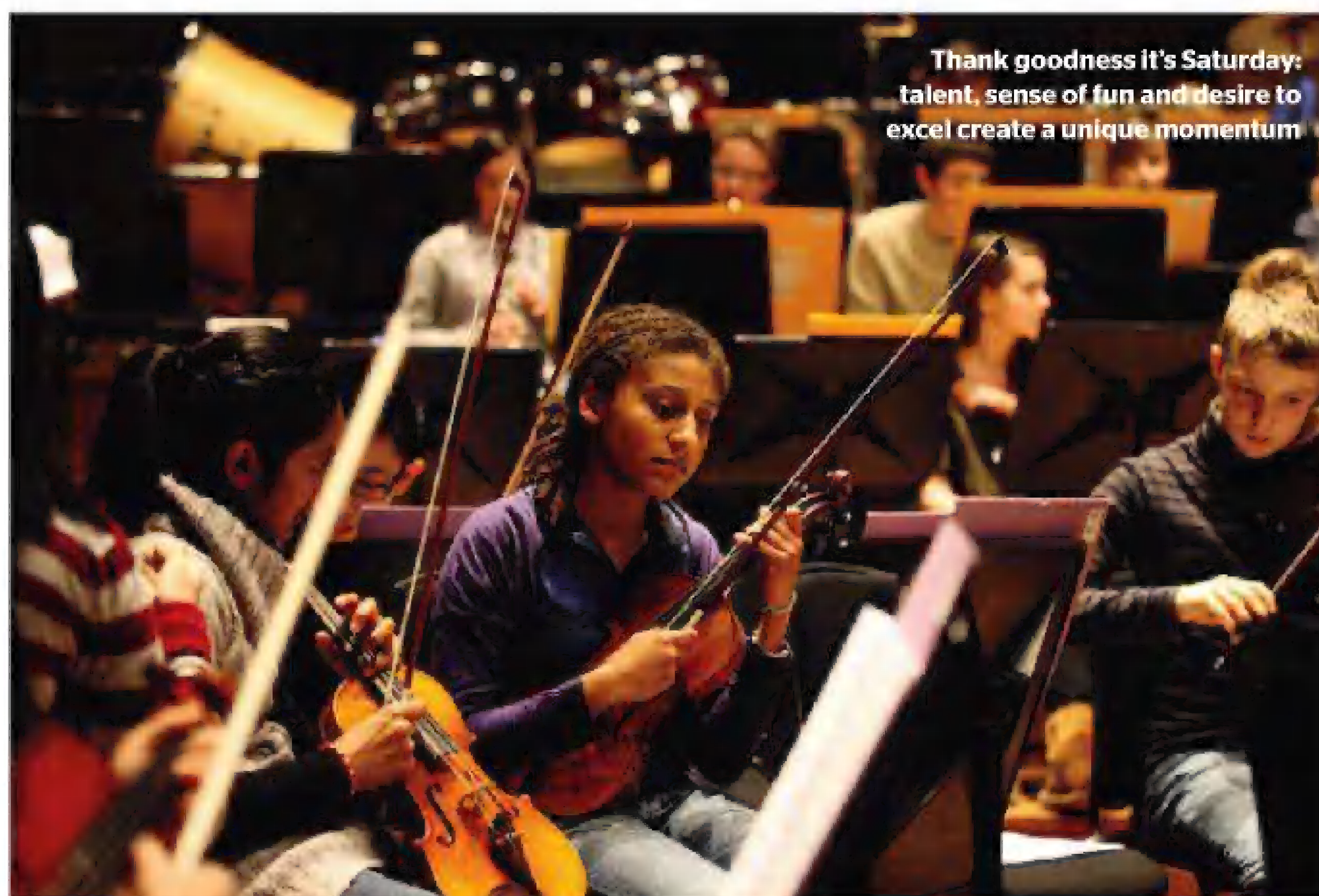
centres of advanced training (Music CATs) across the UK.

While the musical destinations of these young graduates make interesting reading, the most fascinating aspect for me, as the Royal Academy’s principal, is how these schools take on a life of their own outside the weekly, mainstream musical life of the institution. I can spend five days at the “senior” Academy, observing 700 students engaged full-time (and full-on) in their studies, and then I drop in on a Saturday morning and witness a different group of 400 people, this time aged between eight and 18 (rather than 18-25), who genuinely believe that the building was designed for their benefit alone! Such is the nature of the focus, routine and growing sense of identity which young musicians attach to their Saturday “homes”. Many at the RAM Junior Academy graduate to the institution “proper” after A levels; in their audition, candidates speak with an infectious sense of pride about what they have achieved between 9am and 4pm every Saturday of every term. For guitarist and trumpeter Flynn Spence, now in his first year on the Academy BMus, it was the highlight of

this week: “Working with so much talent, great teaching and superb playing opportunities... Junior Academy was the perfect place to grow. I couldn’t wait for Saturday to come round.”

As with the “senior” colleges, competition for places is intense. At our junior academy, some 300 students compete for 60 places each Easter. And it’s not just locals who apply; students come from as far away as Grimsby and Exeter. All the junior departments pride themselves on the quality of their teachers, many of whom enjoy a distinguished performing career alongside their teaching, some also working in the senior conservatoires.

Contact between the junior departments, in particular at the four London-based conservatoires, is vital, especially during the audition process. Many of the students, like their senior counterparts, will audition at more than one conservatoire during the competitive season. Applications are open to those who show real musical potential as instrumentalists, singers and composers, and have a genuine desire to develop their skills. RAM’s junior academy runs starter courses in strings and guitar for 4-7-year-olds, a primary academy



Conservatoire junior departments extend their pupils' capabilities both by specialist teaching and by ensemble work with like-minded children



for 8-12-year-olds and the main junior course for 12-18s. Junior jazz, too, now in its seventh year, is firmly established.

Jonathan Willcocks (son of Sir David and a distinguished composer and educationalist) took over the Royal Academy Junior Academy for the decade 1998-2008. He transformed it into a model of pre-college professionalism, appointing outstanding teachers in all the main instrumental disciplines and introducing an inexhaustible range of chamber, orchestral, choral and supporting studies. Ben Parry, his successor as director, is reviewing how to provide a yet richer experience, and his team are already planning an overhaul of the curriculum to provide, from next year, a greater emphasis on critical performance skills, physical and mental well-being and cross-cultural aspects of music – all part and parcel of the 21st-century musician's equipment.

Trying to attract the right talent from a broad range of backgrounds is a key challenge for junior schools and one that is becoming increasingly linked to the ambitions of the senior colleges. Each is embracing strategies to encourage talented young people from underprivileged backgrounds to consider places such as the junior academy as a real option, not just an ivory tower. Offering scholarships and bursaries is crucial: money is put aside from both internal and external sources to assist those in particular need. In this one respect alone, the senior Academy aspires to the junior department's claim

that "no one is turned away on account of inability to pay". Much of this is enabled by the enlightened government-aided Music and Dance Scheme, a rare example of how funding has transformed advanced musical education at secondary level. The scheme has survived the recent round of cuts; long may it continue.


For many students, the solid grounding they receive at a junior department, including masterclasses, competitions, prizes, workshops, concerts and world-class tuition, is just the right stepping-stone to further study at senior

'These are places dedicated to instilling values of lifelong musical endeavour, professional or otherwise'

level. Of the 40 or so students who left our Junior Academy in the summer of 2010, a third won places at major UK music conservatoires and over 60 per cent are now studying music in higher education. Work at junior conservatoire also sits comfortably with other musical opportunities on offer, whether at school, in local and national choirs and orchestras or residential courses. This year's National Youth Orchestra contains no fewer than 20 RAM junior academy string players.

Junior department students must be prepared for the level of commitment, however. Considerable sacrifice is made by

parents and children, not least in getting up at the crack of dawn when many other families are enjoying a decent lie-in. "Writing off" a day at the weekend demands a dedication that becomes a way of life: a golden opportunity to take a talent further than would be possible in a school environment where music is often extra-curricular, at best. However good the school and its ancillary local musical provision, conservatoire junior departments extend their pupils' capability through access to specialist teaching and ensemble activities of like-minded and similar-ability children. Eloise-Fleur Thom, one of the Academy's top undergraduate violinists, came through the junior academy ranks: "It gave me the confidence to hit the next level in a familiar but always challenging and dynamic environment."

I once heard the overture to Bernstein's *Candide* in a concert given by the junior academy. The combined talent on that stage, sense of fun and desire to excel created a unique momentum. When the conductor walked off after three bars and let the orchestra play on their own, my heart missed a beat – but the band didn't. That type of leadership, teamwork, expertise and nerve can only enrich a young person. Indeed, junior alumni confirm that the life of junior departments plays an integral part in the constant regeneration of musical life in the UK. Widening the net and discovering sources of talent from all kinds of backgrounds can only strengthen these "jewels in the crown" as they evolve. 

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What do you know about the Large Hadron Collider at CERN in Geneva?" Jack Liebeck asks me excitedly.

Not a lot, I admit. "How about superstring theory, then?" he continues, undaunted. "You have these point-like particles with 12 dimensions..." He tails off, admitting that explaining this extremely difficult theory to anyone is "pretty difficult".

While it may appear that Liebeck has been reading one too many Dan Brown novels, the truth is that the British violinist has always been interested in physics, and science in general, and has, for five years now, been involved in an innovative lecture series with Oxford University particle physicist Brian Foster. Aimed at GCSE-level schoolchildren all the way up to enquiring adults, the duo have toured schools, universities and concert halls across Britain with their music-physics collaboration, so far reaching over 20,000 people.

Back in 2005, the lecture was called "Superstrings" and was based on the theory of the same name, but it has gradually morphed into "Einstein's Universe", which gives a more general overview of Einstein's theories before moving on to the development of CERN's Collider. But in both its guises, the lecture's aim has remained the same: to combine classical music and physics – drawing on the connection between the two via Einstein, who loved music – to encourage learning and enthusiasm in both subjects.

It all started back in 2003. "I heard Jack play at the Cheltenham Festival," recalls Foster, himself a keen violinist. "We got chatting and quickly became friends. Then he started to give me lessons." Fast forward to 2005 and Liebeck picks up the story: "It was Einstein Year – 100 years since the Theory of Relativity – and Brian wanted to come up with an outreach programme that was connected to this in some way. We were in the pub after a concert, and I had a recollection that Einstein was an amateur violinist. A light bulb went on, and from there it just gathered momentum."

There is much evidence to support Einstein's involvement with music. "It was a central part of his life away from science," says Foster. "We have indications from his wife, in a letter, that he would often come out of his study, scratch his head and play a few chords on the piano, think a bit more, and then go back into his study and write down some of the new ideas he'd had. It's often the case in science that when one thinks deeply about something, and then has a break doing something different like playing an instrument, this can somehow crystallise one's thoughts in a new direction."

Liebeck continues: "Einstein was a really enthusiastic musician and actually said he'd

Jack Liebeck with particle physicist Brian Foster



The large music and physics collider

Violinist Jack Liebeck has joined forces with a renowned physicist to bring lectures with a twist to schools and concert halls, finds **Sarah Kirkup**

had more pleasure from music than anything else – so we intersperse the lecture with music that Einstein loved." So in a typical lecture, Liebeck will play music for solo violin by Mozart and Bach, and often some Kreisler, because, says Liebeck, "he and Einstein were friends". To conclude, Liebeck and Foster will normally perform a Mozart duo arrangement.

Liebeck and Foster are given funding from the Science and Technology Facilities Council (until the end of 2011) to visit 30 schools a year but they are also invited to visit private schools, universities and music colleges, as well as concert halls. In these bigger venues the lecture is followed with a recital by Jack Liebeck and his pianist Katya Apekisheva – an opportunity that Liebeck relishes. "We try and include music that featured in Einstein's life," he explains. "I'll play Brahms because Einstein apparently played the G major Sonata very beautifully. And sometimes I'll play Martinů's *Five Madrigal Stanzas*, which he wrote for Einstein – they were colleagues at Princeton."

For Liebeck, the most rewarding aspect of the project is introducing scientifically minded people to classical music, and vice versa.

"We get amazing feedback," he says, with genuine pride. "Often teachers will say that the next day the kids come in to physics class completely enthused and wanting to know stuff even the teachers don't have the answers to!"

He also feels he must play as well as he possibly can, particularly if he's playing to people who are new to classical music. "When you go into schools there are kids who don't know any classical music. If I play Bach like an idiot they're not going to like it, but if I play well it may inspire them to start learning themselves. You never know who's going to say 'I want to come to that person's concert' – it's a huge responsibility." 🎻

For future dates of *Einstein's Universe* lectures, visit www.einsteinsuniverse.com. For information on Liebeck and Foster's annual science, music and arts festival, visit www.oxfordmaymusic.com

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Brass tacks

When you consider the tonal and physical beauty of the French horn, you might imagine people clamouring to learn it in their droves. Instead, the gentle star of Britten's *Serenade* is now considered an "endangered" instrument, along with the trombone, tuba and euphonium, despite a successful two-year "Endangered Species" instrument campaign by Youth Music in 2004.

In 2009, 124,090 people took a graded piano exam with the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, compared to 1393 on the horn, 2459 for trombone and a measly 379 for tuba. The ABRSM won't release exact figures for previous years but they will say that the number of horn and trombone examinees has decreased since the mid-1980s.

To a certain extent, this is only natural, as fewer of these instruments are needed. The Hallé employs two trombonists, one tuba player and five horn players against 23 violinists. However, the average seven-year-old isn't thinking of future career prospects when they choose an instrument to learn. A more likely reason is cost. A starter horn or tuba costs around £1000, compared to around £225 for a trumpet and £70 for a violin.

Versatility and being less "cool" are further issues for the horn. Paul Kampen is editor of *The Horn Player*. "You can use a trumpet in almost any kind of music," he says, "but horns are only occasionally used in jazz, rarely in rock music, and are totally taboo in the brass band movement."

The horn also suffers for being one of the most difficult orchestral instruments to learn. It requires specialist horn teachers rather

The number of young musicians taking up brass instruments has fallen in recent years. How can this decline be arrested, asks
Charlotte Gardner

than generic brass ones, and there's a scarcity of them. As a result, Dorset Music Service currently has most of its beginner horns in storage. This year, while its county youth orchestra has two trombonists, horn remains the problem instrument. Walter Brewster is deputy head of the service. "At times we've had to operate an extended membership scheme so ex-members can come back to boost numbers," he mourns. "There are healthy, high-quality centres of brass playing in the UK but they're not as widespread and evenly distributed as they once were. Instead, we're noticing centres of excellence."

One of these "centres of excellence" must surely be East Barnet Music Service, where Sharon Broughall is head of brass. Eight years ago, her music centre had no horn players among 180 young instrumentalists, so she offered horn scholarships, consisting of an instrument plus free tuition for a year. Lessons were half-price after the first year. The scheme ends this year and she now has eight horn players.

Just as important has been the Wider Opportunities scheme, which provides a year of free class lessons and instruments for Key Stage 2 pupils. This has been supported by a £40m instrument fund, money which many music services have used to purchase endangered brass instruments, including 7853

trombones and 2205 horns. Although, it must be said, only 730 tubas.

Broughall has just finished two 10-week Wider Opportunities brass courses. At St Mary's Primary School in Finchley, 60 eight-year-olds have learnt the trombone and tenor horn, a lighter, cheaper, and easier instrument covering the same range as the horn, opening possibilities for a later switch across. "They loved it," she says. "They practised their instruments at home and definitely progressed. Three are now continuing with further lessons". Talking to them, they obviously really do love it. They talk about improvising, and making experimental sounds with the mouthpieces and trombone slides. The sheer noise potential is evidently another draw, particularly for the boys. "I hadn't seen a horn or trombone before," says one, "but there's a really fun point about them, especially trombones – they can go really, really loud!" It's also evidently been more than just a fun blow. They're all talking confidently about the names of the notes and aspects of technique. Broughall's other course, at a school in Hendon, has resulted in 10 new horn players, five new trombonists and five new trumpeters, where previously there were none.


Money, as always, is the key to these schemes and the current funding dries up this September. The Henley Review has been investigating music education in schools and its findings will be published soon. The Federation of Music Services hopes the result will be the continuation of ring-fencing money for music education. Given what has already been achieved for endangered brass instruments, it's essential the work continues. ●

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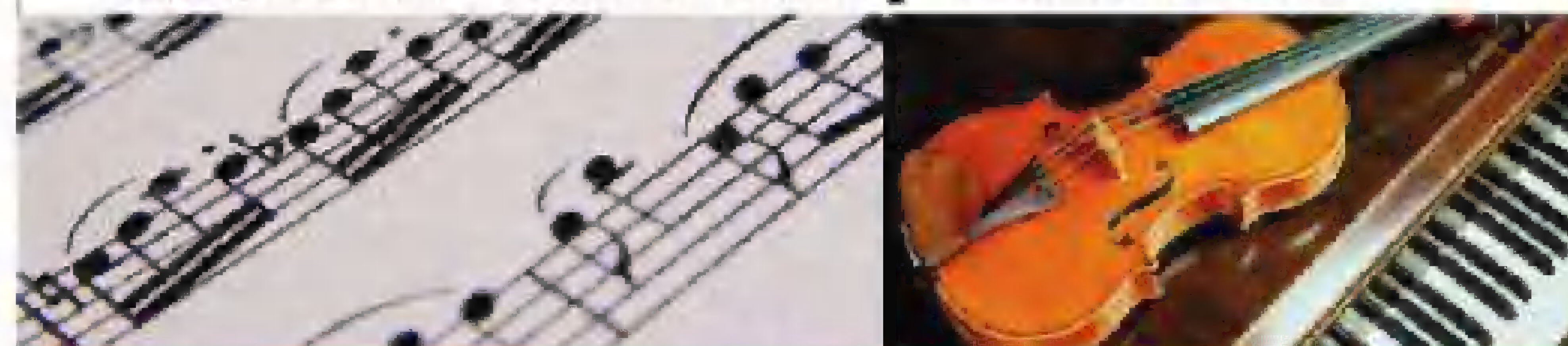


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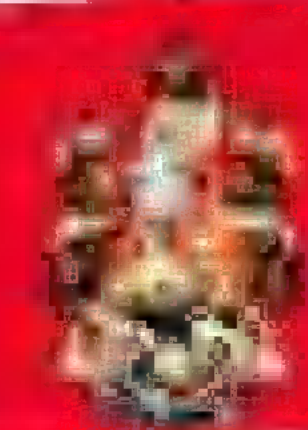


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Musical vacations

It may be cold outside but summer isn't far away and, with it, there's an abundance of music courses to flex our fingers and sharpen our minds, finds **Hannah Nepil**

Summer music courses in the UK

Benslow Music Trust Courses

Little Benslow Hills,
Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9RB
+44 (0)1462 459446
e-mail: info@benslow.org
www.benslow.org
Benslow offers a variety of short courses in classical, jazz, light and early music. Practical music-making programmes cater for strings, brass and particularly woodwind. Music appreciation includes a German Romantic course and a weekend on Heinrich Schütz and his contemporaries. Adult amateurs of any musical ability are welcomed; residential and day options are available.

British Kodály Academy Summer School

c/o 10 Lapwing Close, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 8TD
+44 (0)20 8651 3728
enquiries@britishkodalyacademy.org
www.britishkodalyacademy.org
Beginners, professionals and teachers are all welcomed to this summer school which develops musical expertise through the Kodály approach. The mornings are devoted to musicianship training and choral singing through Kodály's relative sol-fa pitch system. There are classes on the Kodály methodology, choral conducting and optional singing. Applicants can opt for the general summer school course or the more academically orientated Springboard Certificate.

Cambridge Early Music Summer School

Sidney Sussex College,
Cambridge University, Sidney St,
Cambridge CB2 3HU
+44 (0)1223 847330
info@cambridgeearlymusic.org
www.cambridgeearlymusic.org

Adult instrumentalists and singers can study the styles and techniques of early music by spending a week singing, playing and living with specialist ensembles. There are two study weeks, one on Baroque music, the other on Renaissance music, with each day comprising technique workshops, choral and orchestral sessions for large-scale works and small ensemble chamber music-making under the direction of early-music specialists.

Canford Summer School of Music

Sherborne School, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 3AP
+44 (0)1342 893963
canfordsummersch@btinternet.com
www.canfordsummerschool.co.uk
Dating back to the 16th century, Sherborne School provides a historic setting for three weeks of music courses for adult amateurs. Options include choral, conducting and piano courses, choirs, orchestras and wind ensembles, with a handful of masterclasses and workshops. As of last year, observers are also welcome to enrol each week for many of the programmes on offer.

Charterhouse International Music Festival

Charterhouse, Godalming, Surrey GU7 2DX
+44 (0)1483 239621
enquiries@cimf.org.uk
www.cimf.org.uk
Aspiring professional musicians come together to explore solo and chamber music repertoire with celebrated tutors and performers at this high-level annual course held in the grounds of Charterhouse School. Wind and string players, singers, pianists and harpists are all welcome on the week-long programme. Participants receive daily masterclasses and chamber music

coaching sessions, and there are several performance opportunities, some open to the public.

Dartington International Summer School

The Barn, Dartington Hall, Totnes, Devon TQ9 6DE
+44 (0)1803 847077
summerschool@dartington.org
www.dartington.org/summer-school
Complete beginners, enthusiastic amateurs and fully fledged professionals can all benefit from the courses offered by Dartington. Embracing a huge selection of instruments, periods and genres, these residential programmes range from the scratch choir to a crash course in how to write an opera. Attendance at the school is for a week at a time, with participants taking up to three courses in that week.

European Youth Summer Music (EYSM)

Haileybury College,
Haileybury and Imperial Service College, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG13 7NU
+44 (0)1625 428 297
info@federationoffestivals.org.uk
www.federationoffestivals.org.uk
This week-long course aimed at young musicians takes a holistic approach, offsetting musical studies with a full complement of sporting events, discos and the odd barbecue. Musical activities range from the mainstream (symphony orchestra, wind orchestra and chamber groups) to the miscellaneous (gospel choir, samba percussion, improvisation). There are also composition places for six students. Concerts provide students with concerto opportunities; repertoire this year includes Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*.

Hindhead Music Centre Summer Courses

Hindhead Music Centre,
Hindhead, Surrey GU26 6BA
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info@hindheadmusiccentre.co.uk
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These courses, aimed at both children and adults, cater for all levels of musical expertise. Set in a family-owned Victorian country house and surrounded by National Trust land, the programme provides a pastoral setting for instrumental lessons, chamber music, concerts and general music study. Courses range from Discover Music! for children aged 6-10 who still may not play an instrument, to masterclasses for advanced adult instrumentalists.

Music For People (M4P) Summer School

Giggleswick School, Settle, North Yorkshire BD24 0DE
+44 (0)845 619 1689
admin@m4p.org.uk
www.m4p.org.uk
This programme, launched by the Music 4 People charity, lasts for one week and is aimed at students of all ages and skills. Participants choose from ensemble-based courses, ranging from opera to world music and activities including chamber music, symphony orchestra and choir. Students are encouraged to form their own groups and there are opportunities to perform in formal and informal concerts.

Lake District Summer Music

Stricklandgate House,
92 Stricklandgate, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 4PU
+44 (0)845 644 21 44
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www.ldsm.org.uk
Combining an international festival and summer music academy, this course provides opportunities for young musicians

hoping for a professional career in music. There's a daily programme of individual lessons, instrumental classes and ensemble coaching, along with the chance to perform in the international festival. Violinists, cellists, double bassists and pianists may all apply. There is also a scheme for young composers to work with renowned composer Robert Saxton.

Pro Corda

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This educational charity provides courses for most age groups, with a particular focus on chamber music. Chamber courses for 5-18-year-olds run throughout the summer and are open to string players, pianists and wind players. Adult options include the Summer Ensemble Music course, aimed at keen chamber musicians, and Adult Piano, for pianists of all abilities, held at the end of June.

Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama Summer Schools

Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, Castle Grounds,
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SOAS World Music Summer School

SOAS, Thornhaugh Street,
Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG
+44 (0)20 7898 4500

musicevents@soas.ac.uk
www.soas.ac.uk

Covering every corner of the globe, this annual summer

school offers courses including Eastern European Jewish music, Indian tabla, Russian folksongs, Senegalese sabar drumming, Korean Samulnori percussion and more. Amateur musicians are welcome to try out the courses, workshops, taster sessions and masterclasses, regardless of musical ability. If you've always wanted to play the mouth harp or harboured a yearning to master the didgeridoo, SOAS may have the course for you.

Winchester Summer Music

Peter Symonds College, Owens
Road, Winchester SO22 6RX
+44 (0)1827 373 586

maddocks@concordiamusic.eclipse.co.uk

www.concordia-music.co.uk

This chamber music course is open to all string, woodwind and horn players, and pianists, of grade 5 standard and above. Activities consist of three coached chamber music sessions each day, in addition to a string orchestra, large wind ensembles and a chamber orchestra: the main chamber work this year will be Bizet's Symphony in C. Pre-formed ensembles are welcome, although players are also encouraged to form *ad hoc* music groups and there are concerto opportunities for aspiring soloists.

Summer music courses in the US

Cincinnati String Academy

Center for the Arts, 322 Wyoming
Avenue, Wyoming, Ohio 45215
+1 513 948 1900

www.thecenter4thearts.org

Children and adults of all skill levels are eligible for a nine-week summer session of private lessons held at the Cincinnati String Academy, a division of the Center for the Arts in Wyoming. Tuition is available in all string instruments in addition to voice and drums. The length of lessons is varied according to the needs of the individual.

Eastman School of Music Summer Session

26 Gibbs Street, Rochester,
NY 14604
+1 585 274 1400



summer@esm.rochester.edu
www.esm.rochester.edu

Teenagers can prepare for the rigours of conservatoire training with a couple of taster programmes. Music Horizons, a three-week programme, trains students in solo performance on piano, organ, guitar, voice and all orchestral instruments. Participants take two private lessons per week, along with group ensemble training and history and theory courses. Meanwhile, percussionists and wind players can take part in a five-day ensemble workshop, culminating in a concert.

Jacobs School of Music Summer Academies and Adult Workshops

1201 East 3rd Street, Merrill Hall 006,
Bloomington, Indiana 47405
+1 812 855 6025

musicsp@indiana.edu
www.music.indiana.edu

The conservatoire's summer academies provide pre-college students with the chance to throw themselves into their chosen discipline for several days or weeks, with courses offered in percussion, piano, strings and college audition preparation. Meanwhile, adults can choose between a variety of workshops including natural horn, clarinet, violin and viola retreat, Kodály, summer percussion workshop, vocal performance and orchestral rehearsal principles. Each workshop lasts between several days and two weeks.

Juilliard School Summer Music Camps

Juilliard School,
60 Lincoln Center Plaza,
New York, NY 10023
+1 212 799 5000

ccarson@juilliard.edu
www.juilliard.edu/summer

This world-famous conservatoire offers various programmes to train gifted teenagers and help them decide whether attending the Juilliard is right for them. Courses include the week-long Juilliard string quartet seminar, a variety of jazz workshops for musicians aged 12 to college level and the summer percussion seminar, an intensive two-week programme.

New York University Steinhardt Summer Programs

82 Washington Square East,
New York, NY 10003
+1 212 992 9380

steinhardt.summerabroad@nyu.edu

www.steinhardt.nyu.edu

This university offers summer courses, open to all, of between three days and several weeks. Some are aimed at high school students, while others are suitable for college students and graduates. Subjects include classical brass, Spanish vocals, workshops for string quartets, jazz improvisation, piano and music education. There is also a study-abroad option.

Summer Music West

San Francisco
Conservatory of Music,
50 Oak Street, San Francisco,
CA 94102 6011
+1 415 864 7326

smw@sfc.edu

www.sfc.edu/summer/

This initiative, launched by the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, offers 9-18-year-old musicians a variety of courses, shaped according to the principles of conservatoire training. Each course lasts between a week and a month, and this year's options include a string and piano academy, a piano duo academy, an intensive composition course, a chamber music scheme, a musicianship week and a course devoted to scenes from Gilbert and Sullivan: spiffing! ☺

BEYOND THE PLANETS

Not only do we underestimate Holst's signature work, Sir Andrew Davis tells **John von Rhein**, but there's so much more to discover

The adjectives "brisk" and "avuncular" fit Sir Andrew Davis as comfortably as the patterned pullover sweaters that are his chosen rehearsal attire. The eminent British conductor is pleased to welcome me into the office he occupies on the fourth floor of the Civic Opera Building in Chicago, where since 2000 Davis, the former Glyndebourne Opera music director, has held the same position with Lyric Opera of Chicago. He is taking a break from rehearsals for a new production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* – the first of his career, he tells me, excitedly – that was to open soon after our late-autumn conversation. As I ready my cassette recorder, my gaze falls on his many wall adornments, including a watercolour of a Canadian glacier he visited last summer with his son, Edward. Edward is a senior in music education at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, who is planning on following in his old man's footsteps, in a manner of speaking: he wants to become a choral conductor.

Davis *père* settles into a cream-coloured sofa and gets straight to the point. The man whose steadfast championing of English music for most of his 66 years helped earn him a British knighthood in 1999 wants to share his views on the music of Gustav Holst. That music was very much on his mind in late June 2010 when he and the BBC Philharmonic gathered in Manchester's Bridgewater Hall to record Holst's *The Planets* as part of Davis's long-term contract with Chandos. Just released this month, it's his third recording on CD of the English master's Greatest Hit. This latest recording gives Davis an opportunity to share his feelings about a piece he unabashedly adores, yet whose vast popularity, he concedes, has deluded us as to the "real" Holst, overshadowing his gifts as a true original, perhaps the most individual among his English contemporaries.

We tend to take The Planets for granted, but there are extraordinarily original things in it'

Is there, I ask Davis, any validity to the hoary criticism that Holst was a one-trick pony, that nothing else he composed was equal to *The Planets*? None whatsoever, the conductor replies, firmly. "That charge doesn't begin to do justice to his compositional range, even if *The Planets* is the big piece that everybody knows. What is true is that he never again wrote anything on that kind of scale, either in terms of orchestra size or length. So much of his other music has a lot of very intimate qualities."

Davis clearly believes that although the ubiquitous interplanetary suite may not be representative of Holst's large and diverse output, or his musical style in general, it is nevertheless an inspired piece – without which 20th-century English music would be much the poorer. "I find the score endlessly fascinating. It was written for this extravagant orchestra at the time of the First World War, when everything was being rationed and money was tight. It was given a private performance in the last weeks of the war and then had its first public performance in 1920, when its reputation was already established. We tend to take it for granted because we know it so well, but there are extraordinarily original things in it."

With that he opens a well-thumbed miniature score of *The Planets* to point out passages that illustrate his point. "Look at this," he says, directing my attention to the fiercely martial opening movement, "Mars". "The sheer inexorable brutality of that section is quite breathtaking, because it never lets up!" Davis is amused when I bring up Imogen Holst's disclaimer that her father had "never heard a machine gun when he wrote it, and the tank had not yet been invented". He continues: "And 'Neptune', with the women's voices fading away into nothingness at the end, is quite magical, an effect he tried to duplicate in certain of his later works but never managed quite so well. What makes *The Planets* so remarkable, as a whole, is that



Gustav Holst: a composer whose music - apart from his 'greatest hit' - still awaits full recognition

Before the mikes

Sir Andrew Davis's busy recording schedule

Sir Andrew Davis was busy late last year recording English music other than Holst's for Chandos. Sessions with the BBC SO produced a pair of Delius discs, due for release later this year. The first holds the Violin, Cello and Double concertos; the second pairs two exquisite works for chorus and orchestra, *Appalachia* and *Song of the High Hills*. The latter piece, seldom heard since the heyday of Sir Thomas Beecham, was a discovery that Davis says he "completely fell in love with. It has an a cappella chorus part which comes in about two-thirds of the way through – it is one of his most fantastically chromatic pieces, and, boy, did he write nice harmonies!"

Collectors will also welcome a forthcoming Chandos CD containing first recordings of Symphonies Nos 1 and 2 by York Bowen (1884-1961), whose

individual, neo-romantic works are turning up on disc with some regularity. Davis recorded the symphonies with the BBC Philharmonic last October. "The First Symphony, which was written when Bowen was 19, sounds a little Sullivanesque, but it's got a lovely slow movement. The Second Symphony is extraordinary. It sounds a bit like the Rachmaninov Second – very un-English and not of its time. The slow movement sounds in some ways like *Tristan und Isolde*!"

Yet another body of English symphonic works Sir Andrew is taking into the studio is that of the composer and conductor Eugene Goossens (1893-1962). Last year in Melbourne, Davis recorded a collection of Goossens's orchestral miniatures and hopes to follow it up with Symphony No 2 (1942-44) before long.

every movement has its own character, every one so extraordinarily delineated in sound world and style."

My private survey of online retail outlets reveals that there are no fewer than 53 orchestral versions of *The Planets* available in the US, and around 20 in the UK (the numbers don't include the several recordings of Holst's own version for two pianos, a transcription for symphonic band or an electronic realisation by Tomita). Davis's own previous recordings of *The Planets* still grace the catalogue – the first made with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra for EMI in 1986 during his tenure as music director there, the second with the BBC Symphony Orchestra for Teldec/Warner in 1993 during his term as that orchestra's principal conductor, from 1988 to 2000.

I ask Davis how his approach to *The Planets* has changed over the years. "I hate that question!" he exclaims with affable indignation. "All I can say is, things evolve! I haven't listened to either of my earlier recordings for a long time. The funny thing is, there are some recordings I've made over the years that I've never listened to at all. The truth of the matter," he says, lowering his voice, "is that there is almost no recording I have ever done that I have been completely satisfied with. There are always those where you think, 'Oh, that phrase could've been turned more elegantly', or 'That other one was not quite right'."

"On the other hand, I just listened to the first edits of [the new Chandos disc] and, on the whole, I like it very well. We did a concert performance of it in Bridgewater Hall before recording it there, which was nice, because *The Planets*, which uses such a big orchestra, needs that kind of space. What Ralph Couzens [Chandos's managing director

extraordinaire] wanted was to get a sound that really has the big space around it. The only comments I made when I sent the edits back were that I thought a couple of things sounded too closely miked."

The most controversial aspect of Davis's old EMI recording was his use of a children's choir – the Toronto Children's Chorus – instead of women's chorus in the wordless *vocalise* that trails off into the endless cosmic beyond, at the end of "Neptune". Davis laughs. "It was certainly a talking point at the time! But I certainly would not do so again. I thought the innocent sound of children's voices would be interesting, but it's not right. Holst wrote it for women's voices, and that's the way it should be."

Another thing you won't find on his *Planets* remake is *Pluto, the Renewer*, the pendant that composer and Holst scholar Colin Matthews attached to the suite 82 years after its premiere, and which Simon Rattle (EMI), Mark Elder (Hyperion), David Lloyd-Jones (Naxos) and other conductors have included in their recent recordings of *The Planets*. "Well," Davis observes jocularly, "since Pluto has in more recent years been downgraded by the International Astronomical Union, it's not a true planet anymore, and in any case, the idea of filling out the sequence is one of the silliest things I've ever heard of. Matthews's addendum is actually not a bad little piece, but it's still very redundant."

Chandos has coupled Davis's new *Planets* with two less familiar pieces of Holstiana, the charmingly exotic "oriental suite", *Beni Mora* (1909-10) and the *Japanese Suite* (1915). "*Beni Mora* is a three-movement piece. The first movement is a bit *Shéhérazade*-like. The second is sort of whimsical and bangy, Arabian-style. The third is a remarkable piece. Holst was on holiday in Algeria and he was in a marketplace where an Arab played the same phrase on a bamboo flute for more than two hours, non-stop. He was so taken with it that the four-note figure dominates the movement. It reflects his uncanny ability to encapsulate a mood or a concept. The *Japanese Suite* is a real rarity – ours, I believe, is only its second recording. It is rather uneven, but has some moments that are absolutely exquisite."

I ask Davis which other works of Holst's he particularly admires and would recommend to Holst newbies determined to get beyond you-know-what and other popular pieces such as the *St Paul's Suite* and the two Suites for military band. "Well, for starters, his lovely little opera *Savitri* is exquisitely delicate. Do you know *The Hymn of Jesus*? An extraordinary work! And then there are all sorts of other things of smaller scope – part-songs and folksong settings and the *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*, all beautifully crafted music that merits greater attention." I venture my opinion that *Egdon Heath*, Holst's strange, bleak and brooding orchestral homage to Thomas Hardy, is one of the great landscape paintings in music, another score that's still too little known. Davis, who recorded the piece with the BBC Symphony Orchestra during the 1990s, nods in agreement, reminding me that Holst considered it his best work.

The composer's canon is extraordinarily wide-ranging. The influence of Wagner colours Holst's early works, but he put that aside as he developed his interest in such far-flung subjects as Sanskrit literature, English poetry, neo-classical and Baroque styles, astrology and, especially, teaching. In 1905, he was appointed head of music at St Paul's Girls' School, Hammersmith, where the tireless pedagogue remained until the end of his life. Although his music shares certain traits with that of his close friend and colleague, Ralph Vaughan Williams – particularly a love of English folksong – he marched to his own drum, refusing to embrace the obvious and shallow, or to follow up on the success of *The Planets* with other orchestral blockbusters. Indeed, according to Colin Matthews's valuable entry in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Holst was "constitutionally incapable of repeating himself". This, coupled with the composer's often unconventional musical language (his use of modality, for instance)

'There is almost no recording I have ever done that I have been completely satisfied with'

Star conductor -
Sir Andrew Davis



and the unevenness of his output, has made Holst if not the most elusive then certainly the least known of the major English composers, underrated during his lifetime and insufficiently appreciated today.

Not long ago, I came across a tape of an interview with Imogen Holst in which she remarked that her father attended a concert of Schubert's Quintet in C major, given only a few years before his death in 1934, and from it he realised that a central element missing from his own music was "warmth". Perhaps the intensely self-critical Holst was being too hard on himself, but the increasing austerity of his late, post-*Planets* works tends to support his sober assessment. Perhaps there might have been a warming trend in his later works had he enjoyed the Indian-summer longevity of Vaughan Williams (Holst was only 59 when he died). Alas, we will never know.

One thing we do know: Davis has inherited the late Richard Hickox's mantle as Chandos's in-house Holst specialist. Hickox graced the catalogue with numerous fine performances of Holst's music and had begun to record the remarkable *Choral Symphony* with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales when he suddenly died in November 2008. Davis plans to set down his own interpretation for the British label, although no sessions have yet been scheduled. The work, in a prelude and four movements, incorporates poetry by John Keats, and is, in his view, problematical. "It has some fantastic things in it, but it is kind of over-scored, and I've been thinking about actually pruning it." He pauses. "But that's for the future!"

As Davis prepares to dash back into *Mikado* rehearsals, I take my leave, but not before voicing my hope that his deep commitment to Holst's music, like his commitment to the broad range of English music, will continue to bear fruit in the recording studio as in the concert hall. He flashes me a cheery thumbs-up on the run, as if to second the motion.

For all its unevenness, there is a visionary quality to Holst's sometimes austere, often unpredictable, music that amply repays one's listening efforts. *The Planets* has ensured the composer's immortality, but it is dismaying that its vast, deserved if disproportionate popularity – undimmed for 90 years and counting – has not encouraged much further exploration among musicians and concert managers. Perhaps that day will come. Until it does, Alec Robertson's verdict, which concluded his survey of Holst recordings in the September 1962 issue of *Gramophone*, must stand. Holst, he wrote, was "a distinguished and imaginative composer whose true worth awaits the recognition he never sought". © *John von Rhein has been classical music critic of the Chicago Tribune since 1977*

Discovering Holst rarities

Recordings Holst adventurers won't want to be without

The Cloud Messenger (with A Choral Fantasia etc)
LSO & Chorus / Richard Hickox
Chandos ® ② CHAN241-6

This is one even avid Holstians don't know, a lengthy (45 minutes), recently discovered (1984) choral masterpiece based on an ancient Hindu lyric poem. The beauty and power of certain episodes foreshadow the great *Hymn of Jesus*, which is included in this splendidly performed two-disc collection.

Vedic Hymns, Four Songs for Voice and Violin, Humbert Wolfe Songs

Susan Gritton *sop* Philip Langridge *ten* Christopher Maltman *bar* Stuart Bedford *pf*
Naxos ® 8 557117

Originally released by Collins Classics, this offers an absorbing selection from the 72 solo songs Holst composed across his career. Of the performers, none is finer than Susan Gritton in the touching songs for voice and violin, where she's ably partnered by Luisa Fuller.

A Winter Idyll, Elegy etc
LPO, LSO / David Atherton
Lyrita ® SRCD209

Eight early and late miniatures, variable in quality, although

several gems are well worth discovering, most notably the Hindu-inspired symphonic poem *Indra* (1903), full of ravishing orchestral colour. Atherton does all of them to a fare-thee-well.

The Morning of the Year, The Golden Goose, King Estmere
Guildford Choral Society, Philh Orch / Hilary Davan Wetton
Hyperion ® CDA66784

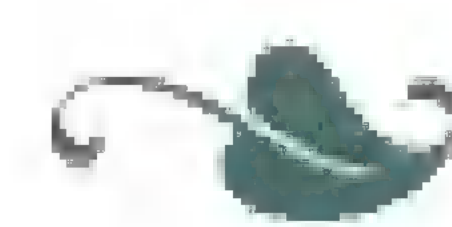
If the Guildford choir sounds more conscientious than inspired in the two choral ballets and the old English ballad *King Estmere*, the music's hearty, mystical qualities are put forth most appealingly.

Sāvitri, Egon Heath, A Fugal Concerto etc

Imogen Holst, Adrian Boult, Christopher Hogwood *et al*
Decca ® ② 470 191-2DF2
One of the most valuable entries in Decca's British Composers line, this two-CD collection of reissues is an absolute must for all who want a fuller understanding of Holst's musical range. Worth having just for the young Janet Baker's heart-stoppingly beautiful singing in the wondrous chamber opera *Sāvitri*.

Travels with a cello

Dvořák's elegiac Cello Concerto is one of the instrument's finest showpieces. **Rob Cowan** has been listening to some of the many recordings of the past 80 years



When Brahms first set eyes on Dvořák's (second) Cello Concerto he is said to have exclaimed, "Why on earth didn't I know that one could write a cello concerto like this? If I had only known, I would have written one long ago!" No exaggeration, I'm sure. This greatest of all concertos for the instrument was one of Dvořák's last "American" works. With its heroic orchestral writing and achingly nostalgic closing pages, it remains the ultimate test for any cellist's expressive and technical capabilities.

The Concerto's recording history is long and varied, too extensive in fact to survey comprehensively in an article such as this, though I've tried to do justice to the enormous range of interpretations that has appeared with the passing years. The mellow-toned, 26-year-old **Emanuel Feuermann** provides a dazzling entry-point, his playing precociously brilliant, like an athlete in peak condition turning somersaults, jumping an octave quite early on in the first movement (Zara Nelsova in 1951 and Pierre Fournier in 1948 do the same) and, even more striking, taking another heady leap towards the coda. You soon forget the odd spot of iffy intonation in the *Adagio*. Feuermann and his conductor **Michael Taube** opt for some hair-raisingly fast tempi, faster than those on two later Feuermann broadcasts (under Leon

Barzin and Hans Lange), and although the sound is primitive, the performance is the most overtly virtuoso we have. Here was a cellist in a million and boy, did he know it – and show it!

Apparently Dvořák's Concerto was one of **Gregor Piatigorsky's** "great showpieces". His first commercial recording with the Philadelphia Orchestra has **Eugene Ormandy's** well-drilled band leap out at you for each *tutti*, whereas Piatigorsky himself draws a light, intensely vibrant tone, his playing overall truly throwing caution to the winds, sometimes at the expense of hitting the note dead-centre. His 1958 RCA recording with the Boston Symphony under **Charles Munch** is warmer, more loving, more accurate and rather less

'If its history on disc had stopped with Casals, the greatest recording would have been in the can'

spontaneous-sounding than with the Philly Orchestra, and with a more aggressive rostrum presence. The RCA stereo recording is explosive but exciting.

The Spanish cellist **Gaspar Cassadó** made two commercial recordings of the Concerto, the first in 1935 for Telefunken (last out on a Lys CD) with the Berlin Philharmonic under **Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt**, whose conducting has a fresh, rhapsodic feel to it. Cassadó enters

with big, broad bow strokes, whereas the *molto sostenuto* passage roughly halfway through the first movement becomes a moonlit vigil. Cassadó's intonation tends to wander in the slow movement, which is where his 1950s Vox remake with the Vienna Pro Musica Orchestra under **Jonel Perlea** is marginally more secure. Also noticeable on the later disc is his subtler, more expressive tonal palette, though the Vienna orchestra is certainly no virtuoso ensemble, save for some impressive horn playing. Lys's mostly good 78 transfer has one or two ill-judged side-joins and Vox's mastertape has a number of clumsy edits.

If the history of Dvořák's Concerto on disc had stopped dead at **Pablo Casals's** HMV set with the Czech Philharmonic, then at least the work's greatest recording would have been securely in the can. No question, Casals in '37 still conjures its full quota of magic: the immediate sense of tension that **George Szell** establishes with the opening *tutti*, the woodwinds' quick turns of the phrase and then Casals's first entry, bold, heroic, gutsy... goading his colleagues for a precise response. And when we reach his highly personalised statement of the big tune, the way he climbs down to sing, melding vibrato and non-vibrato, his tone coloured at midrange with an incomparable mellowness, though some might find the rasping edge of his attack just a mite too aggressive. Throughout the first movement, Casals, Szell and the orchestra keep arguments tense but never overstated; the slow movement sings out and the later

Truly international:
the Czech composer
wrote the Concerto in
New York and it was
premiered in London



The Gramophone Collection

episodes in the finale have an outspoken, oratorical quality that helps focus the epic nature of the closing pages.

The young **Paul Tortelier**'s exuberance is well caught on a recently unearthed 1944 Paris radio recording where **Willem Mengelberg** inspires the city's Radio Orchestra truly to go for the jugular. In later years Tortelier may have added a range of pastels to his primary colours, but still, you cannot but be drawn in. Malibran's transfer is pretty well OK (the acetates were found on a skip) but rival editions on the late Michael Thomas's "Mengelberg Edition" (Archive Documents) and the Japanese Seven Seas label rather confuse the issue. Thomas suggested that for the actual concert Tortelier was replaced by **Maurice Gendron**, which is almost certainly who we hear playing on both CDs (Gendron's approach is in general more restrained and inward than Tortelier's), but is Mengelberg conducting? I very much doubt it. Listen to the Malibran disc and you'll note the massive – and characteristic – *ritardando* that Mengelberg imposes on the closing pages of the first movement, the familiar double-rap of his baton before the movements start and among the horns a level of vibrato that was a prominent feature of French brass at the time. None of these observations apply to the other two CDs. Still, if you want vintage Gendron in addition to vintage Tortelier, why not go for both – and have a guess at who is conducting for Gendron. I'd be very surprised if it's Mengelberg.

Various versions featuring **Pierre Fournier** have come down to us, most of them suggesting an iron grip in a velvet glove. Ever the gentlemanly player, Fournier could none the less lunge his bow with the best of them, and his first (1948) commercial Dvořák, with

a game but scrappy Philharmonia under a prideful (and at the time recently exiled) **Rafael Kubelik** balances passion and poetry in near-ideal proportions. Fournier's energy, expressive *portamentos* and weeping high baritone are unforgettable, more so than on a more tastefully moderated 1961 remake with the Berlin Philharmonic under **George Szell**, whose get-up-and-go in this work had by then partially gone, although his ear for detail remained as acute as ever. It's a beautiful production but hardly a great performance.

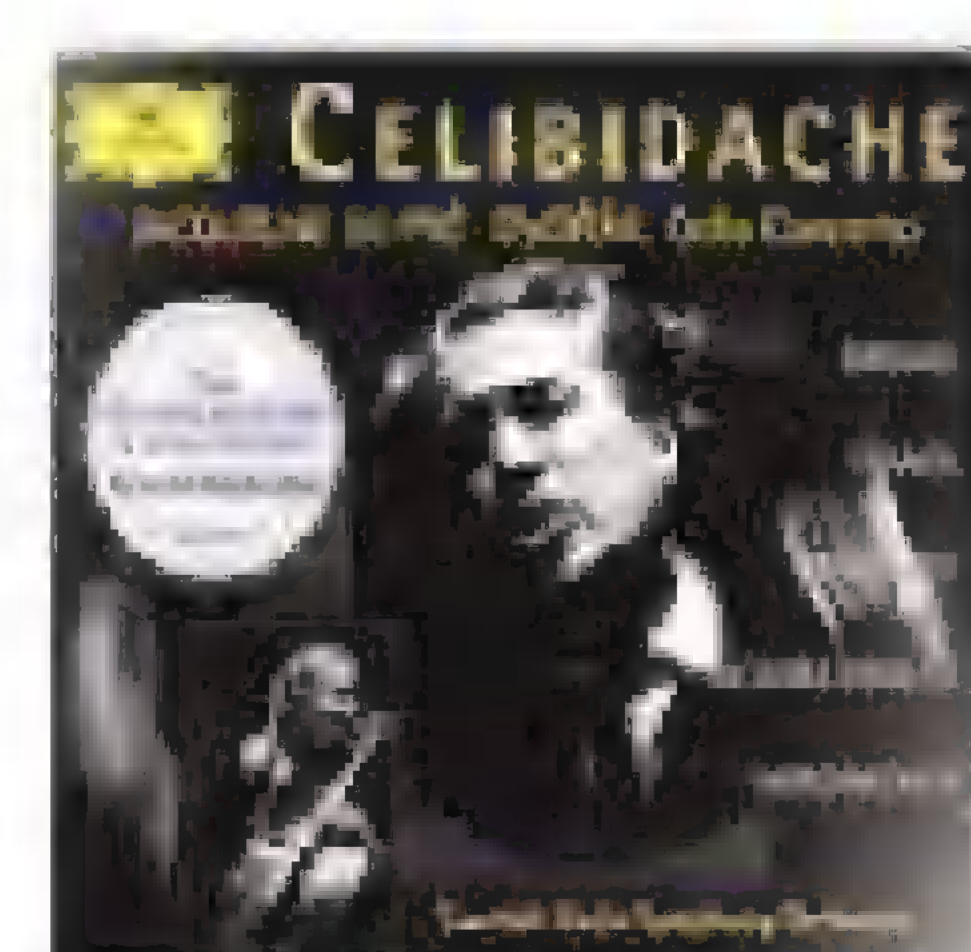
Of **André Navarra**'s two extant recordings, the earliest, recorded live at the 1951 Prague Spring Festival under the visionary baton of **František Stupka**, burns the brightest, its intensity, keenness of attack and volatile nature bringing it within hailing distance of Casals. Like Szell with the same orchestra, Stupka sets the stage for the first movement's drama and those temple-swelling octaves beyond the movement's centre are magnificently negotiated. The slow movement, too, cries its narrative with a very special eloquence and the Concerto's closing moments truly blaze. Four years later Navarra made an EMI studio recording with the National Symphony Orchestra of London under **Rudolf Schwarz**, which, although generally effective in detail and tonal appeal, is nowhere near as intense or compelling as the live version.

Better by far is **Zara Nelsova**'s 1951 Decca recording with the LSO under a very expansive **Josef Krips**. Although technically impressive, her playing is noteworthy above all for its gentle *pianos*, its depth of feeling and, in particular, the way she deals with those tearful, falling sequences in the slow movement. The cumulative effect of this dignified and emotionally potent performance is quite overwhelming, though it won't suit every mood. **Jacqueline du Pré** in 1970 (EMI) is overwhelming in a quite different way, what with the lacerating attack of her bow, her hushed, almost prayer-like playing of the big tune's first entry, and the cut and thrust of her shorter notes at speed. Du Pré's is a reading full of heart but at this early stage **Daniel Barenboim**'s conducting lacked finesse and certain *tuttis* sound decidedly blurred around the edges. Furthermore, EMI's resonant recording thrusts du Pré right under our noses while leaving the more distant Chicago Symphony to manage as best it can. Turn to a Prom recording from the previous year with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic under **Charles Groves** and the effect is infinitely more subtle: the BBC engineers' recorded balance is better and Groves has a firmer grip on the Concerto's structure. A third du Pré version has **Sergiu Celibidache** fulfil a role

similar to the one that Talich fulfilled for the young Rostropovich (see below), setting a noble context, in this case for a red-blooded protagonist who wrings a maximum of emotion from the Concerto's every bar.

The long-lived relationship between Dvořák's Concerto, **Mstislav Rostropovich** and the gramophone started when the great Russian cellist was just 25 years old and Supraphon recorded him in collaboration with the Czech Philharmonic under **Václav Talich**. The result suggests a gifted albeit awestruck initiate demurely singing while a wise elder looks on, guiding his orchestra through an alert and supremely natural account of the score. Rostropovich gains assertiveness for his next (and possibly best) recording of the work, taped in London in 1957 with the Royal Philharmonic under **Adrian Boult**, a more formal advocate than Talich though hardly less sympathetic, and who manages some well-judged rubato in the finale. Jump forwards 11 years and we enter the Royal Albert Hall on the day the Russians invaded Prague, a Prom that none of us who were present will ever forget, Rostropovich all tears and outrage set against a high-voltage USSR Symphony under **Evgeni Svetlanov**, with fast speeds, fierce bow strokes and barely contained levels of intensity. A few weeks later Slava had, metaphorically speaking, calmed, gained weight, slapped on some heady aftershave and teamed up with **Herbert von Karajan** and the Berlin Philharmonic for a tonally plush and prominently spotlight account with lunging lower strings, aromatic woodwinds (a gorgeous flute in duet with the cello halfway through the first movement) and, in the work's drawn-out coda, a feeling of nostalgia that borders on sentimentality. It's a full-on deluxe production, and has many virtues, but a sense of local

THE MAVERICK CHOICE

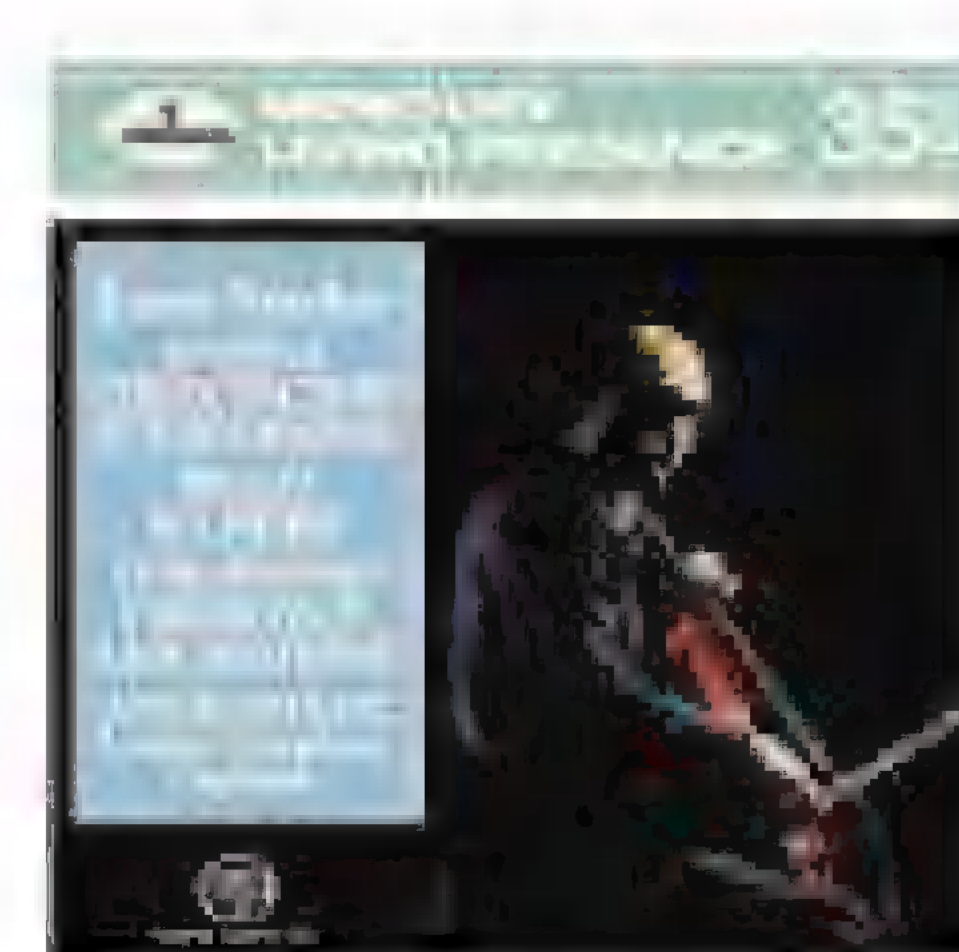


Du Pré, Swedish Rad SO / **Celibidache**
DG ④ 469 069-2GH4

In theory the combination of Jacqueline du Pré and Sergiu Celibidache suggests the prospect of fire and ice, or something very like it. Not so. Their Dvořák is less a meeting of minds than a melding of spirits, one that yields countless unexpected delights.



THE MID-PRICE CHOICE



Starker, LSO / **Dorati**

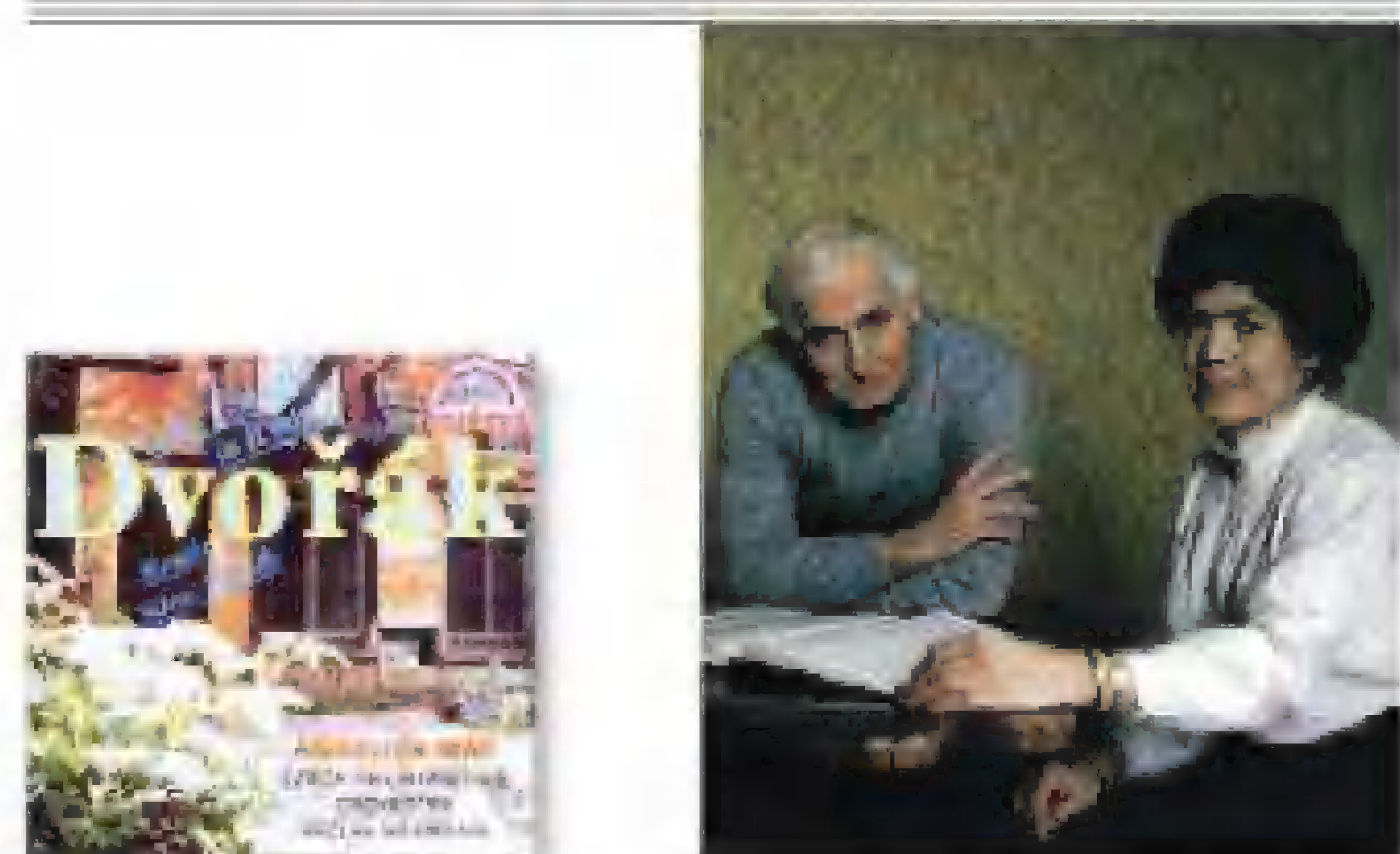
Mercury ④ 432 001-2MM; ④ 475 6608MSA
You could say that Janós Starker is a cellist's cellist, a true acrobat of the bow. His Dvořák is muscular and, where needed, warmly lyrical. Dorati and the LSO are keenly alert to the score's every shifting nuance and the sound stands up remarkably well.



colour definitely isn't one of them. Still, rather than a 1977 EMI "Great Recording of the Century" with the London Philharmonic under **Carlo Maria Giulini**, which opens lugubriously and never really comes to life. Viewed overall this performance lacks tension and grit, though I smiled at the way Giulini brightens up for the first movement's closing pages, as if rubbing his waking eyes after a long, somnambulistic journey.

Heard next to the stylistically outsize **Daniil Shafran**, Rostropovich becomes the epitome of subtle understatement. Shafran was a huge personality with a tone to match, his attack both secure and muscular, his vibrato brought gradually to the boil while the note builds. Magnetic and unashamedly sensuous, this voluptuous outing stays in the memory, though Shafran's suave, crooning tone has to be offset against an occasionally scrappy Estonian Philharmonic under **Neeme Järvi**. The crudely overstated slow movement comes off worst. Järvi also conducts a generally superior Gothenburg Symphony for **Frans Helmerson**, though some sections of the score sound rather prosaic – the woodwinds at the start of the *Adagio*, for example. It's obvious that Helmerson is in sparring mood: after a secure first entrance he's off for the chase, teasing and cajoling, and speeding with a smile, though when he pauses for thought he wears his heart fairly near his sleeve. The orchestra copes reasonably well but the sound lacks inner detail.

Among Czech recordings of note, **Miloš Sádlo** offers authoritative, quietly emotive playing, solidly supported by the Czech Philharmonic under **Václav Neumann**. Sádlo is especially effective in the first movement's arpeggiated passages but elsewhere it's his playing of the work's more reflective moments that really strikes home. Supraphon's recording



May, Czech PO / **Neumann**
Supraphon © 11 1544-2
Angelica May is hardly a name on everyone's lips but her 1982 recording is one to treasure. Hers is a pedigree interpretation (she studied with Casals), always sincere and intelligent, and the Czech Philharmonic under Neumann offers her truly symphonic support.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY			
DATE / ARTISTS		RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)	
1928/29	Feuermann, Berlin St. Op. Orch / Taube	Naxos	© 8 110901 (4/00)
1935	Cassadó, BPO / Schmidt-Isserstedt	Lys	© LYS188
1937	Casals, Czech PO / Szell	Pristine	© PASC246
1944	Tortelier, Grand Orch of Radio Paris / Mengelberg	Malibran	© 2 CDRG188
?1944	Gendron?, orch / Mengelberg?	Archive Documents	© ADCD116
1946	Piatigorsky, Philadelphia Orch / Ormandy	Sony	© MHK62876
1948	Fournier, Philh. Orch / Kubelik	Testament	© SBT1016 (7/93)
1951	Navarra, Czech PO / Stupka	Arlecchino	© ARL171
1951	Nelsova, LSO / Krips	Decca	© 5 475 6327DC5
1952	Rostropovich, Czech PO / Talich	Supraphon	© SU3825-2 (3/94*, 3/06)
1955	Navarra, Nat. SO / R. Schwarz	Testament	© SBT1204 (3/01)
c1957	Cassadó, Vienna Pro Musica Orch / Perlea	Vox	© 2 CDX2 5502 (11/93)
1957	Rostropovich, RPO / Boult	Testament	© SBT1101 (5/97)
1958	Piatigorsky, Boston SO / Munch	RCA	© 09026 61498-2; © 82876 55302-2; © 82876 66375-5
1961	Fournier, BPO / Szell	DG	© 423 881-2GGA; © 429 155-2GR; © 474 167-2GEN; © 477 5939GOM6
1962	Starker, LSO / Dorati	Mercury	© 432 001-2MM (3/91); © 475 6608MSA
1967	Du Pré, Swedish Rad. SO / Celibidache	DG	© 4 469 069-2GH4 (2/01 - nla)
1968	Rostropovich, USSR SO / Svetlanov	BBC Legends	© BBCL4110-2 (7/03)
1968	Rostropovich, BPO / Karajan	DG	© 447 413-2GOR (3/85*, 5/95*); © 471 620-2GM2 (6/02)
1969	Du Pré, RLPO / Groves	BBC Legends	© BBCL4156-2 (12/04)
1970	Du Pré, Chicago SO / Barenboim	EMI	© 3 763283-2; © 555527-2 (11/95); © 562803-2 (6/04)
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2004	Vogler, NYPO / Robertson	Sony	© 82876 73716-2 (3/06)
2008	G. Capuçon, Frankfurt Rad. SO / P. Järvi	Virgin	© 519035-2 (4/09)

is rather resonant but falls pleasantly on the ear. Memories of Casals echo prominently throughout a beautiful performance by **Angelica May**, with tastefully applied expressive *portamentos* and many subtle touches (the slow movement's cadenza is among the most affecting on disc), while Neumann's detailed Czech Philharmonic accompaniment fully matches his effort for Sádlo, and the digital recording is excellent. May's performance is sincerity personified.

Mercury's sound for **János Starker** with the London Symphony under a consistently alert **Antal Dorati** is typically well focused. This classic 1962 reading is taut, lean, pointedly dramatic, razor-edged (especially for those soaring octaves later on in the first movement)

and much helped by the fact that Starker's naturally contained tone loves the microphone. Starker dramatically reduces his tremulous vibrato for the first movement's central vigil and I'd say that if you fancy his style of interpretation (he recorded the work on various occasions) this is the option to go for.

Mischa Maisky's 1988 recording is a generously demonstrative affair, occasionally mannered and sporting some conspicuous dynamic extremes. Maisky in Israel never bows an ugly note: his tone is warmly cushioned but the real surprise is **Leonard Bernstein's** conducting, where the opening *tutti* is uncommonly dark, only picking up speed (and light) just before the soloist enters. The centre of the first movement darkens again (think

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the spirit of music

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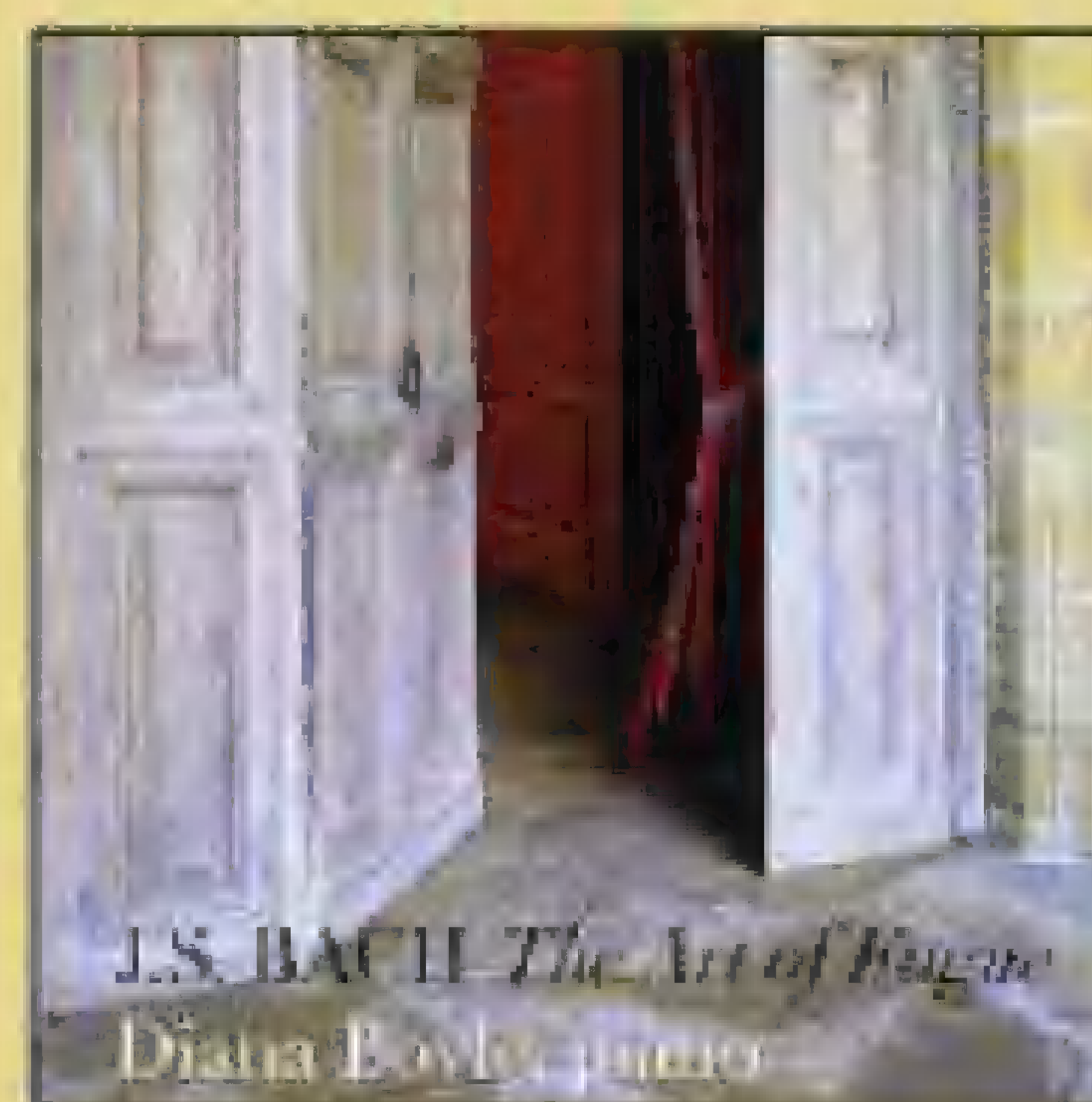
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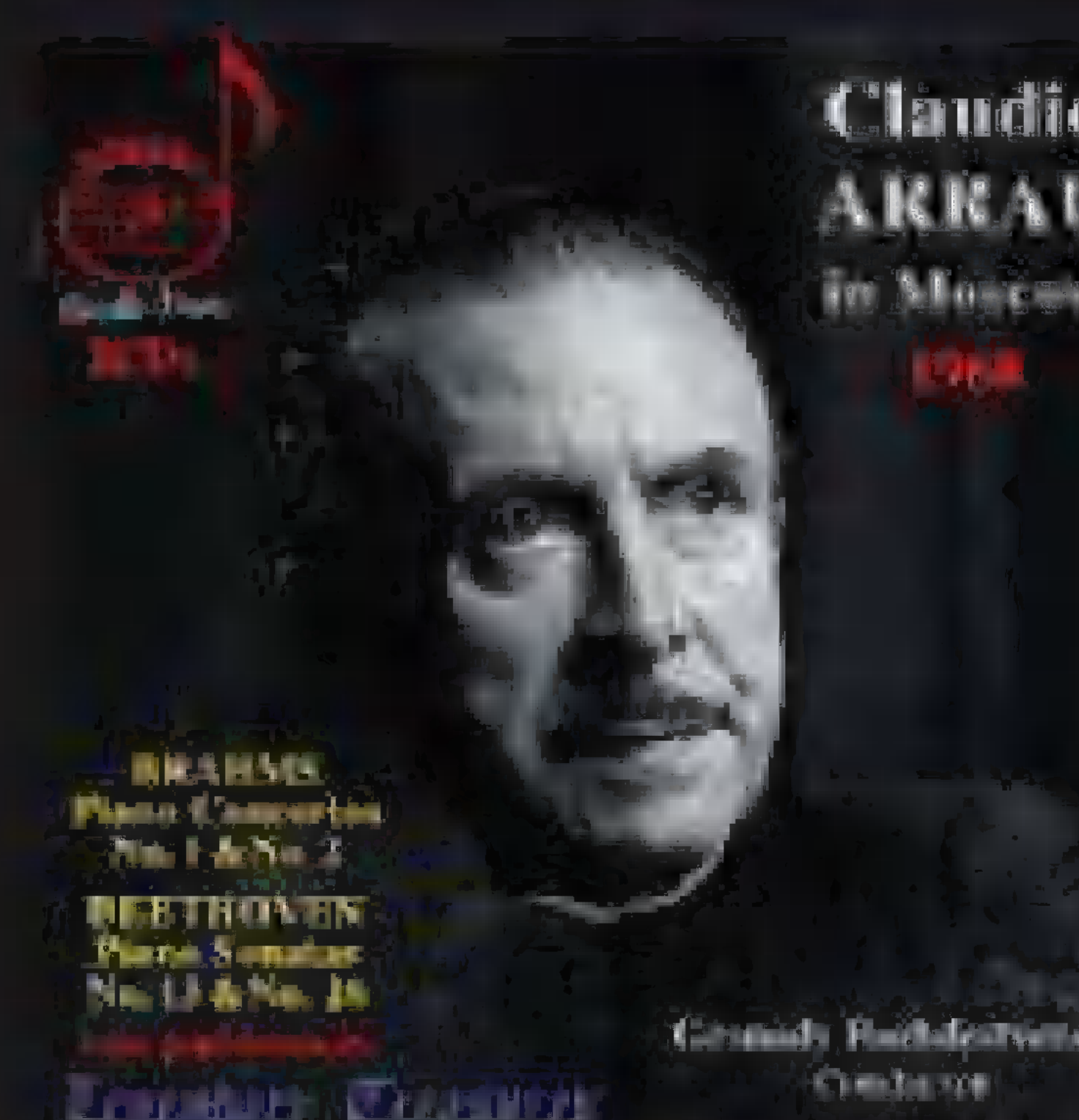
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Mstislav Rostropovich,
performing a work with
which he had a long and
emotional relationship



of the Seventh Symphony) and the finale's slower episodes positively ache with nostalgia. Maisky's second (live) recording, under **Zubin Mehta**, is quite different, with an overall timing of 37'45" to compare with Bernstein's 43'34": Maisky with the Berlin Philharmonic wields a lighter bow; his attack has more impact, and although still warm-hearted, the effect is less emotionally full-on than under Bernstein. **Maria Kliegel** seems very much in Rostropovich's thrall: her big sound, expressive candour and overall flexibility were surely inspired by the great man himself, though there are times when she pushes her tone too hard (ie, at the centre of the first movement at the beginning of the finale). **Michael Halász's** conducting is dependably supportive rather than especially distinctive.

Truls Mørk offers an infinitely lighter traversal, persuasively accompanied by the Oslo Philharmonic under **Mariss Jansons**. Pleasing felicities abound while Mørk produces a lissome, well-oiled tone, with malleable phrasing and wholly natural rubato. Rostropovich is again a probable influence. **Kurt Masur** and the New York Philharmonic set the scene for **Yo-Yo Ma** with plenty of bounce, and the big horn solo is broadly paced

and beautifully played. A little later, Ma takes up the same theme *sotto voce*. Here as elsewhere his approach suggests an intimate series of exchanges, the soloist very much acting as "first among equals". Odd affectations – such as some rather stagy *pianissimos* – can rankle and I didn't much care for the exaggerated solo *crescendo* at the end. For me, it's Masur who is the star of the show here: his clear-headed, triumphant account of the orchestral score is a joy in itself. That drawn-out *crescendo* at the end has a parallel in **Pieter Wispelwey's** recording of the same year (1995), a busy, colour-coded affair with cleanly focused woodwinds chirruping away behind the soloist's opening commentary. Wispelwey's sensuous approach is like soft-option Shafran: he employs widely varying bow pressures and I love the way he tiptoes into the slow movement, as if from within the orchestra. The second and third movements follow on very quickly from each other, the finale itself vigorous and dance-like, though the oscillating tempi and widely spaced dynamics occasionally play with my head.

The year 2004 saw **Jan Vogler** record the Concerto with an animated New York Philharmonic under **David Robertson**,

THE TOP CHOICE



Casals, Czech PO / Szell

Pristine © PASC246

This historic choice doubles as a first choice, a case where an early classic remains essentially musically unchallenged. Casals achieves pathos, drama and unspeakable poignancy, and the Czech PO responds vigorously to the young George Szell's alert direction.

a bright, transparent production, with forceful orchestral interjections in the slow movement and a buoyant finale. No depths are plumbed and no hearts broken, but it all makes perfect musical sense and it's very well recorded. **Gautier Capuçon's** performance is a maddening catalogue of affectations, with smoothed-out climbing octaves and mannered varieties of vibrato that detract from the main arguments. **Paavo Järvi** conducts a robust accompaniment but it's no compensation for the woefully unidiomatic solo playing.

So that's it. Dvořák loved trains and in a sense this *Gramophone* Collection has been like a long, instructive journey. My sincere apologies to those waiting for Josef Chuchro, Lynn Harrell, Antonio Janigro, Ludwig Hoelscher, Enrico Mainardi, Arto Noras, Miklós Perényi, Jean-Guihen Queyras, Leonard Rose, Heinrich Schiff, Torleif Thedéen, Raphael Wallfisch and Julian Lloyd Webber. Sadly, there was no time (meaning no space) to call at every stop. As to top recommendations, I'm tempted to say, "there's Casals, and there are the others". In a sense, that would be true, at least for me...but it would also relegate my top mid-price choice (János Starker) and my favoured digital version (Angelica May) to the status of also-rans. They're both a good deal better than that, and so are at least 20 other contenders mentioned in this all-too-brief summary. The trick is never to stop comparing and rediscovering. I shan't – and I'll be starting again from the moment this article goes to press. ☺



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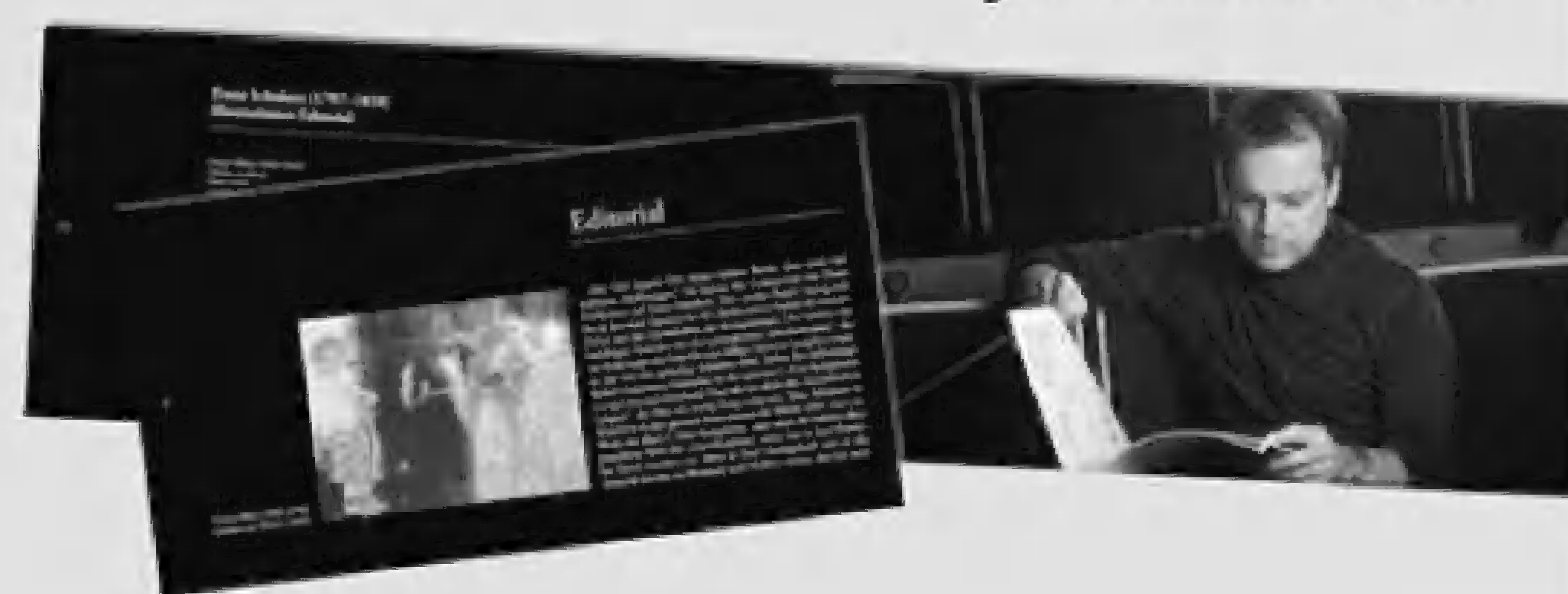
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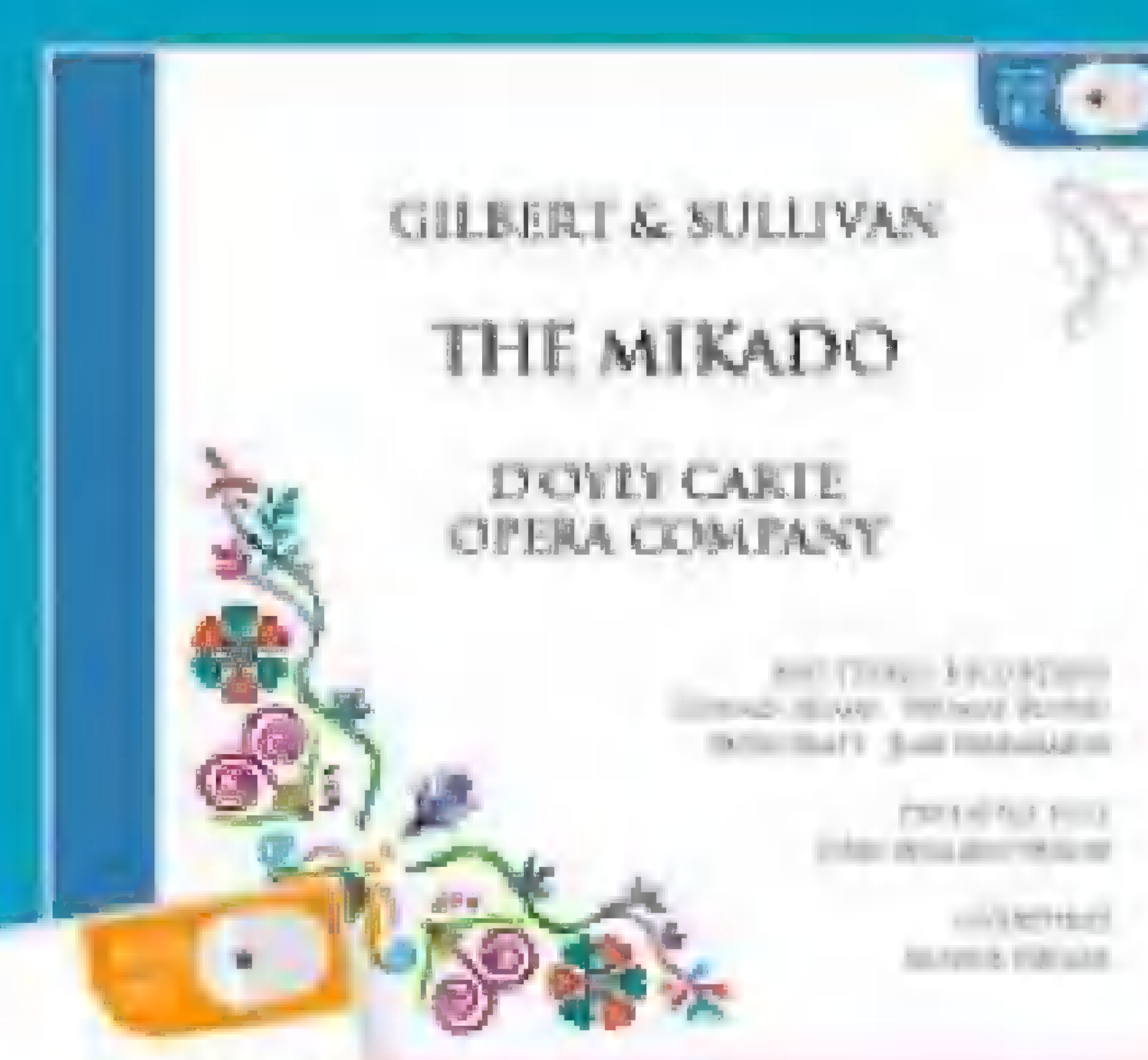


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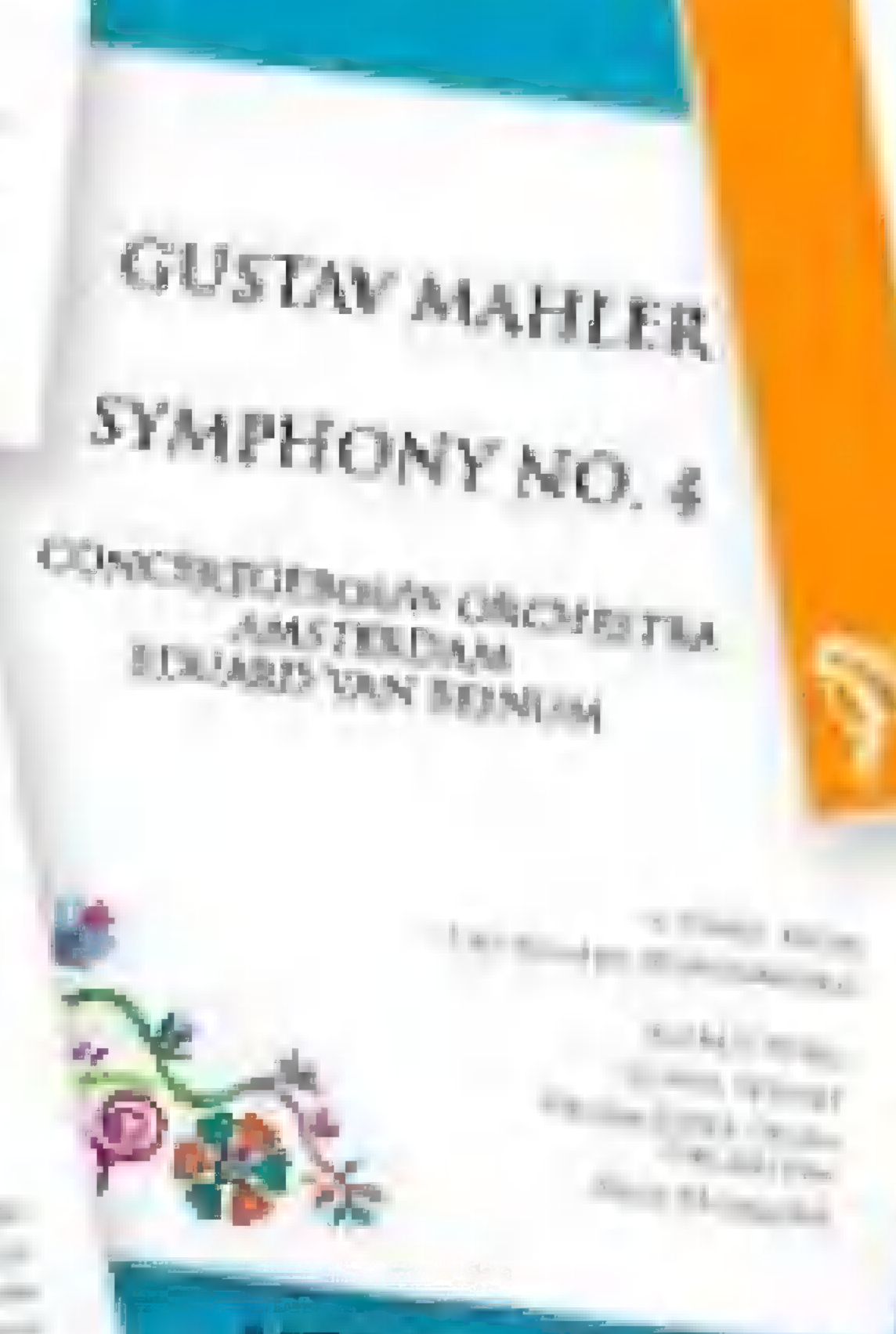
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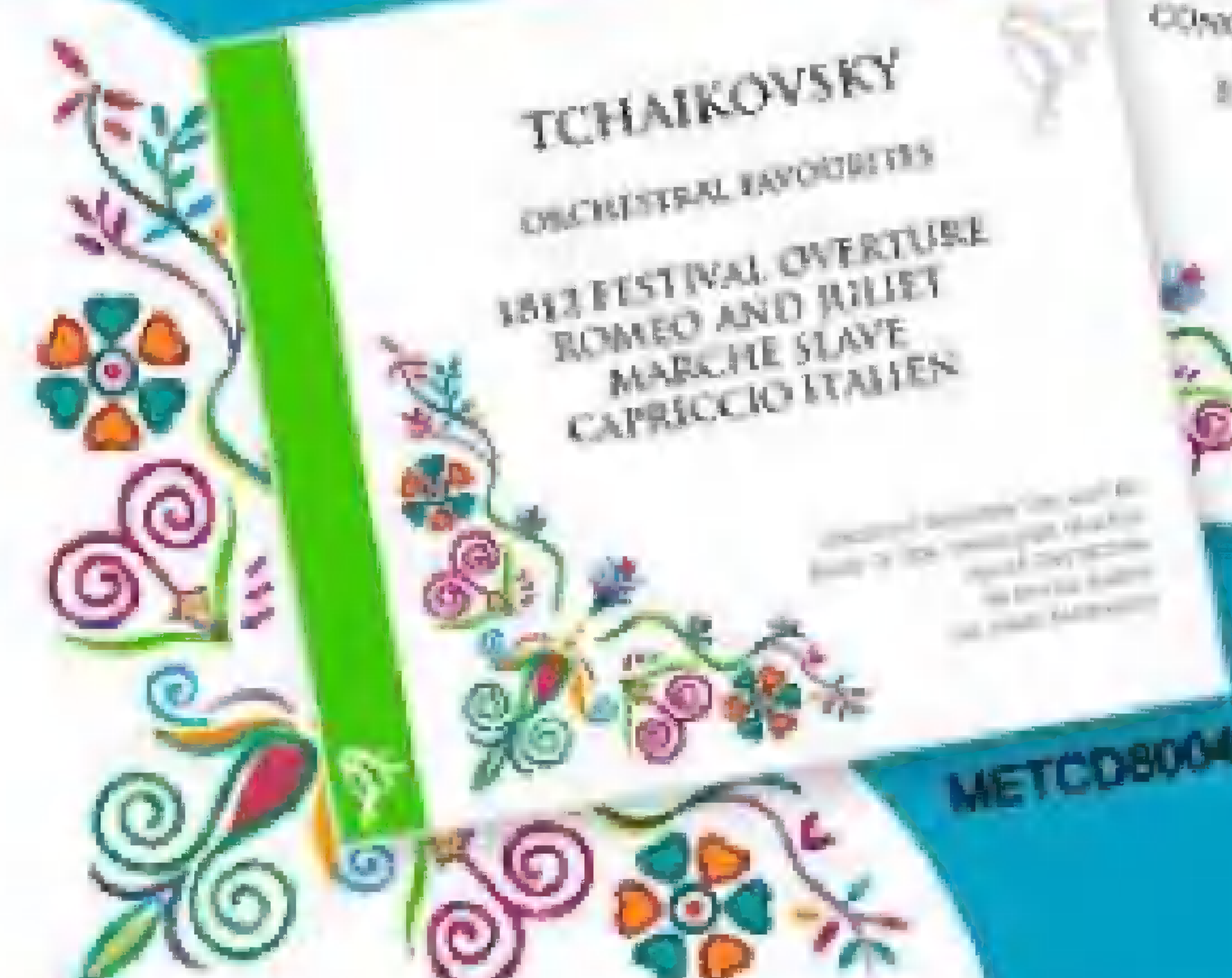
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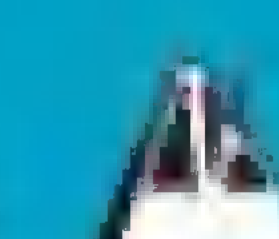


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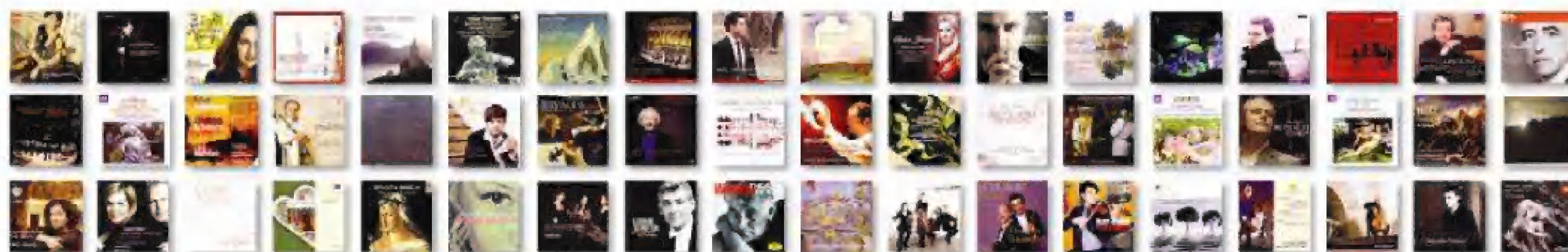
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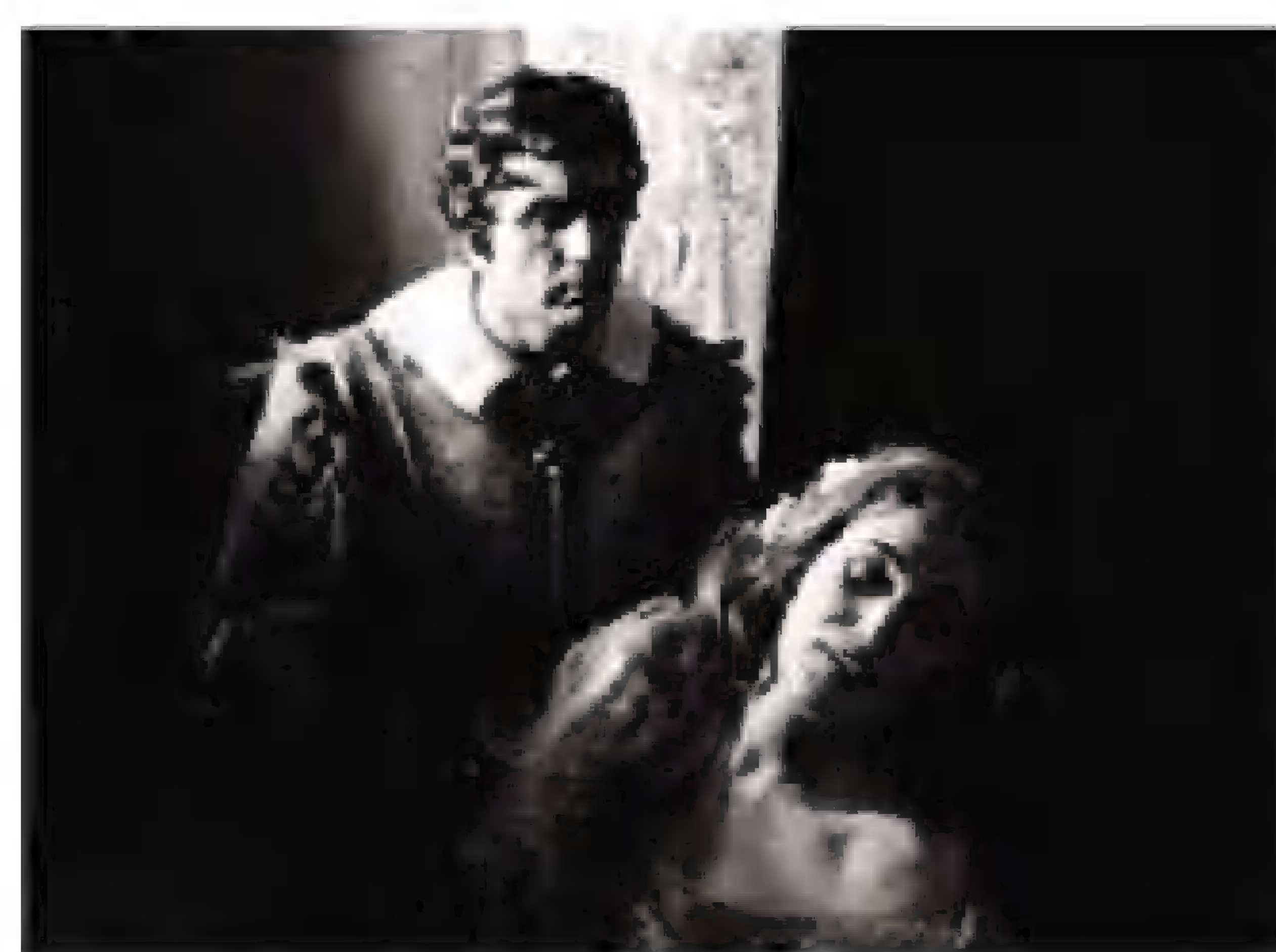
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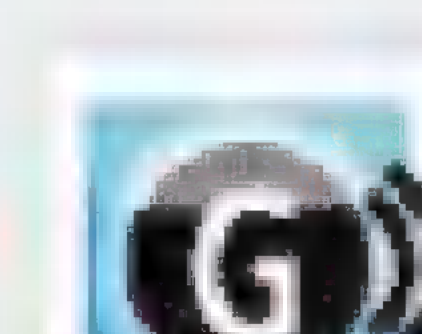
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Editor's Choice
See page 12



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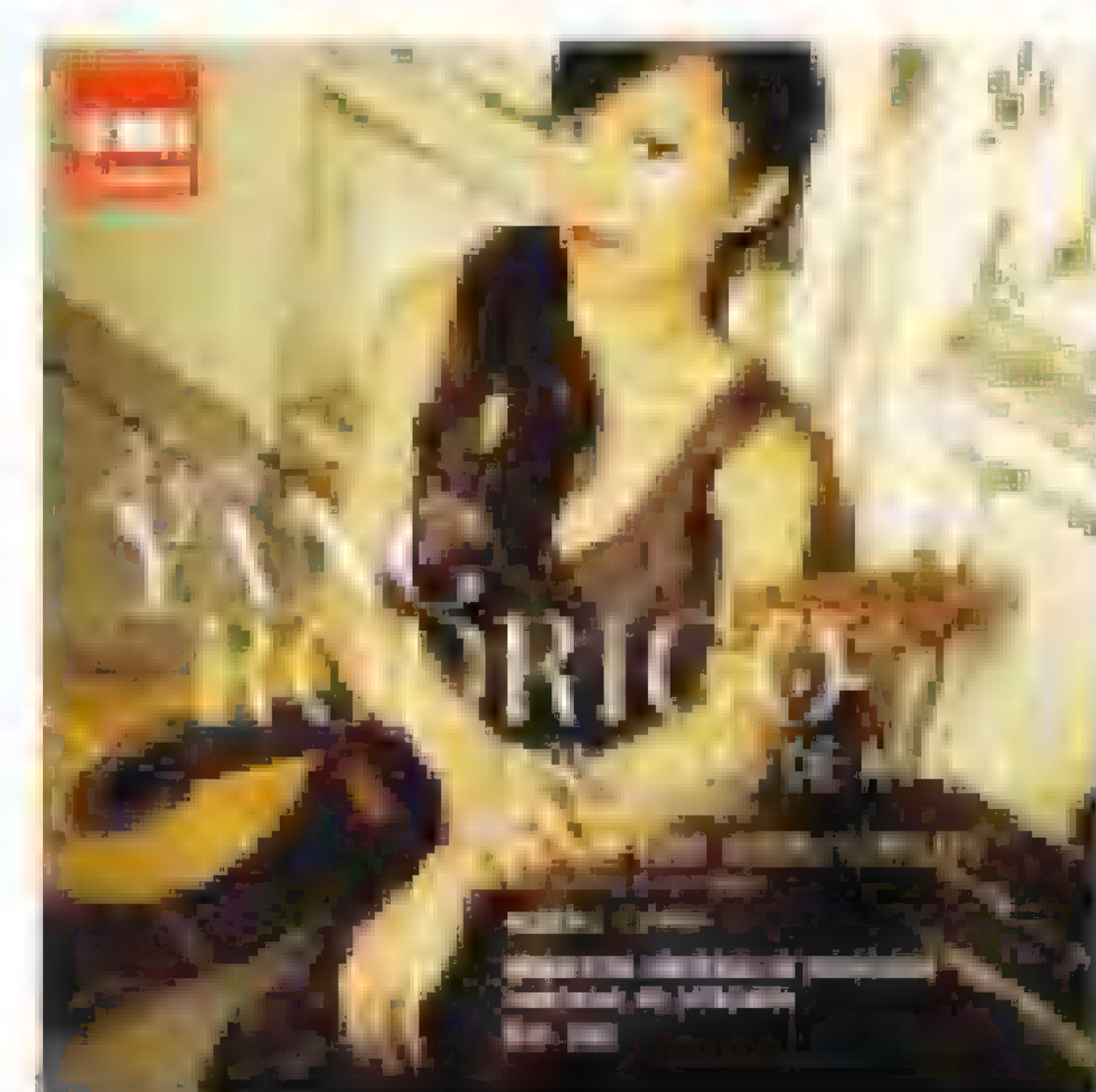
Albéniz • Goss • Rodrigo

Albéniz España, Op 165 (arr Yang) **Goss** The Albéniz Concerto^a **Rodrigo** Concierto de Aranjuez^a. Invocación y danza

Xuefei Yang *gtr*

^aBarcelona Symphony Orchestra / Eiji Oue
EMI © 698361-2 (76' • DDD)

Rodrigo's classic plus a new concerto fashioned from Albéniz's piano music



Xuefei Yang was the first guitarist to graduate from Beijing's Central Conservatory of Music and the first Chinese guitarist to study in the West, and is now firmly

established as one of the finest classical guitarists of her generation. For her third EMI disc, she bookends a newly commissioned concerto by longtime collaborator Stephen Goss, based on solo piano pieces from Albéniz's *Iberia* and *Suite española*, and her own transcription of Albéniz's *España*, with Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* and *Invocación y danza*.

Thanks to Yang's synthesising mind, of which her frightening technical fluency and musical intelligence are but two manifestations, this programme works a treat. The Rodrigo concerto is replete with that barely contained explosiveness that recalls Argerich at her best; this results in a certain impatience in the *Adagio* but moments of sublime excitement in the opening *Allegro con spirito*. The Barcelona Symphony Orchestra under Eiji Oue follow Yang's lead while nevertheless allowing for more relaxed phrasing where possible, as in the cello and cor anglais solos.

The *Albéniz Concerto*, a wonderful orchestral showpiece in which the guitar takes centre stage, is despatched with élan by both soloist and orchestra. Goss's writing for winds is particularly sensitive and colouristic, and while his own musical personality tends to be subsumed by Albéniz's, this is a strong work that one hopes will become a permanent part of the repertoire.

Bereft of an orchestra in *España* and *Invocación y danza*, Yang compensates with a dazzling array of colours that complements her fastidious yet exuberant interpretations – which ensure this disc ends not with a whimper but with a bang. **William Yeoman**

Bach

Oboe Concertos^a – after BWV49, 169 & 1053; after BWV35 & 156. Oboe d'amore Concerto, after BWV1055^b. Double Concerto for Oboe, Violin and Strings, after BWV1060^c. Easter Oratorio, BWV249 – *Adagio*^a

^aAlina Ibragimova *vn*

Swedish Chamber Orchestra /

Alexei Ogrintchouk ^{ac}ob/^bob d'amore

BIS © BIS-SACD1769 (64' • DDD/DSD)

Bach as he may have sounded: concertos recreated for oboe



None of these four concertos is original Bach; each is a conjecture of how it might have started life. The best known, and the masterpiece among

them, is the Concerto for Violin and Oboe. Though it is familiar in the version that has come down to us for two harpsichords, internal evidence points to the soloists being originally violin and oboe, and in that form it has been much played and recorded. There was a famous recording by Yehudi Menuhin and Léon Goossens (EMI), using a transcription in D minor, which takes the oboe up abnormally high for Bach. The version here, by Wilfried Fischer, is in the more suitable C minor, with a somewhat discreet contribution from Alina Ibragimova that none the less helps to set the work beside the Double Violin Concerto as one of Bach's greatest concerto masterpieces.

Another welcome rediscovery (also once memorably recorded by Goossens) is the A major Concerto for oboe d'amore, a lovely instrument usually only heard in Bach's Passions, originally rescued for the purpose of this concerto from its harpsichord version by Donald Tovey. Ogrintchouk plays it beautifully, again in an edition by Fischer, with a just appreciation of the instrument's mellow tonal qualities. He has the understanding of how Bach's long phrases are braced by shorter ones within their span, which is an essential quality of good Bach-playing. The other two solo concertos find him equally at home, with the F major work originally the F major Harpsichord Concerto, and a D minor concerto assembled from cantata fragments. Only the sublime Sinfonia from the *Easter Oratorio* is authentic Bach –

and that, it has been suggested, might have begun life as a concerto slow movement. The confused collector can follow the unravelling of all these complexities in an excellent scholarly booklet-note by Geoffrey Burgess, or simply be grateful for four admirably played and recorded oboe concertos by a great composer who wrote demanding but incomparably for the instrument.

John Warrack

Bach

'A Strange Beauty'

Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, BWV639 (arr Busoni). Nun freut euch, lieben Christen gmein, BWV734 (arr Kempff). Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring (arr Hess). English Suite No 3, BWV808. Keyboard Concertos^a – No 1, BWV1052; No 5, BWV1056

Simone Dinnerstein *pf*

^aStaatskapelle Berlin Chamber Orchestra

Sony Classical © 88697 72728-2 (62' • DDD)

Dinnerstein goes back to Bach but lacks the consistency of the finest players



For her Sony Classical debut release, Simone Dinnerstein returns to Bach, whose *Goldberg Variations* helped hoist the pianist into the international limelight.

As is often the case when Dinnerstein faces Bach, either live or on disc, genuinely inspired moments alternate with mannered or mundane playing. The latter includes her weighty, heavily accented readings of *Ich ruf zu dir* and *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*, which lack the simplicity and long-lined calmness one hears from Horowitz and Fischer in the former and Fleisher, Lipatti and, of course, Hess in the latter.

The dynamic gradations in both concertos' outer movements are prefabricated to the point of preciousness, although one must acknowledge Dinnerstein's energetic execution, plus the unusual clarity and point of her left-hand work. However, she's too loud in the mix in the D minor's central movement, dominating the unison strings as they whisper the theme in the mousiest, vibratoless collective tone. Her G minor English Suite reveals similar contradictions. The Prelude is crisp and well contrasted, while the Allemande drags and swoons in contrast to the clearer lines that emerge from

Murray Perahia's brisker, more cohesive rendition. In the Courante, Dinnerstein's left-hand *crescendos* sometimes cover the right-hand melody, although her jazzy inflections loosen up the first Gavotte's powdered wig to delicious effect. As a Bach pianist, Dinnerstein obviously is serious, and has fingers to burn, but she does not yet command the focused consistency that distinguishes Perahia, Schiff and Hewitt.

Jed Distler

Beethoven

Symphony No 9, 'Choral', Op 125

Krassimira Stoyanova *sop* Lioba Braun *contr*

Michael Schade *ten* Michael Volle *bass*

Bavarian Radio Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Mariss Jansons

BR-Klassik 900108 (66' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Paul VI Audience Hall, Rome, October 27, 2007

A Choral Symphony performed with a sense of joy before a papal audience



A year after Pope Benedict XVI visited his native Bavaria in 2006, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Chorus made their own pilgrimage to Rome

to perform Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. A DVD was later released (ArtHaus Musik) which includes the address on Beethoven and the Ninth Symphony which Pope Benedict gave after the performance. The new CD largely ignores the performance's context. Oddly so, since the booklet contains a brilliantly succinct essay by Marco Frei on the political history of the symphony and the problem of performing it in the post-war world, a subject touched on by Pope Benedict in his address.

Yet context matters. The key to Jansons's reading is its clarity and understated intensity, the stripping away of all extraneous gesture and, in the finale, of any hint of easy triumphalism. The quality of the musicianship is one factor (Bach, one feels, would have relished Jansons's treatment of the instrumental movements). Another is Jansons's own heritage, born in the Jewish quarter of Riga in 1943 and later brought up in Soviet-run Leningrad. As Frei remarks, "Doubt is always part and parcel of [Beethoven's] equation".

The finale is indeed impressive. Words are clear and pitches secure in a performance in which a sense of a joy that is at best provisional is strongly etched. The clear acoustic of the Paul VI Audience Hall (shades of Munich's Herkulessaal) serves the music-making well. The applause is not rowdy but respectful and warm, a note one hears all too rarely these days.

Richard Osborne



Eschenbach's gripping return to the A major Symphony

Sixth SENSE

Bruckner

Symphony No 6

London Philharmonic Orchestra /

Christoph Eschenbach

LPO 900049 (60' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, November 4, 2009

Selected comparison:

Houston SO, Eschenbach (KOCID) 37484-2



We've had a Bruckner Sixth from Christoph Eschenbach before, with the Houston Symphony. Here, as there, the accent is on scale and lyrical line. This present performance was taped at the Royal Festival Hall and has a good many laudable virtues, lightness of texture being one of them. Try the tautly buoyed opening of the *Scherzo*, or the elfin delicacy at the start of the Trio at 2'38", where soft *pizzicato* strings are answered by warmly unanimous horns. The noble – and potentially tricky – finale is very skilfully handled, its various sub-sections always sensitively paced, the string-dominated second subject especially, while the closing pages feature some superb brass playing. So does the first movement where,

again, carefully gauged tempo relations are crucial, especially for the cantering central section (starting with flutes at around, say, 6'14", answered by strings), the shifting textures and modulating harmonies taking a potentially monumental turn at 7'04" when string choirs ferry us towards the movement's great central climax. The coda, too, is extremely well judged, starting at 13'31", the blazing (and well-controlled) brass counterpoint that dominates during the next couple of minutes or so one of the high-points of the performance.

But perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the performance is the *Adagio*, a very broad 20 minutes, beautifully sung by all the sections: try the string section's *diminuendo* that falls from 16'06", the way it turns back into a key motif from earlier on. This is truly one of Bruckner's great slow movements and I'm not in the least surprised to see an Eschenbach version of it surface for a second time – actually, if you check the big Bruckner discography at www.abruckner.com, you'll note that it's for a sixth time! The music really suits him. In the digital field, I'd rate it alongside similarly gripping versions under Gielen (Hänssler Classic), Skrowaczewski (Arte Nova) and Wand (Profil, or RCA, 2/91 and 10/96). **Rob Cowan**

Beethoven • Bruckner



Beethoven Piano Concerto No 2, Op 19.

Bruckner Symphony No 4, 'Romantic' (1880 edn)

*Bruno Leonardo Gelber *pf* Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Klaus Tennstedt

Testament ® ② SBT2 1448 (110' • ADD)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Berlin,

December 14, 1981

Bruckner – selected comparison:

LPO, Tennstedt (A/06) (LPO) LPO0014

Tennstedt's superior live reading of the 'Romantic' Symphony is worth hearing



Klaus Tennstedt's 1981 Berlin recording of Bruckner's Fourth Symphony (EMI, 2/83) is no longer available but this superb live account from the same period is

ample recompense. More so than the LPO's live 1989 Royal Festival Hall performance which is entirely surpassed in terms of the drive, imagination and power of Tennstedt's engagement both with the music and the orchestra. The Berlin Philharmonic recording, expertly remastered by Testament from Berlin-Brandenburg radio tapes, also surpasses its London equivalent in richness, depth and clarity of sound.

The real test of any performance of Bruckner's Fourth Symphony is the finale, which Tennstedt handles with special understanding: generously paced, shrewdly detailed and comprehensively of a piece. Significantly, the first horn is as eloquent in the elegiac 16-bar solo which emerges out of the coda's hymn-like initiation as he is in the symphony's celebrated opening. That magical horn line echoes the slow movement's principal "processional" motif. Tennstedt plays the *Andante quasi allegretto* broadly, at the kind of lingering pace favoured by Walter, Böhm and Celibidache, rather than swiftly and idiomatically as Klemperer and Kempe do. He also retains one or two details – orchestral "gestures" you might say – from the old Löwe/Schalk edition of the score. This will be familiar territory to Tennstedt followers, who will not be dissuaded from treating the release as archive gold.

The two-record set comes at a special price, since the concerto which preceded the symphony in the Berlin concert is added on a second 30-minute CD. It was two bargain-price LPs of Beethoven's Third and Fifth piano concertos which in 1968 first propelled the 27-year-old Bruno Leonardo Gelber to prominence. The finale of the youthful B flat Concerto is here lacking in skittishness and subversive wit but there is enough to enjoy in the two earlier movements. The orchestral playing under Tennstedt is stylish and sure-footed.

Richard Osborne

Brahms

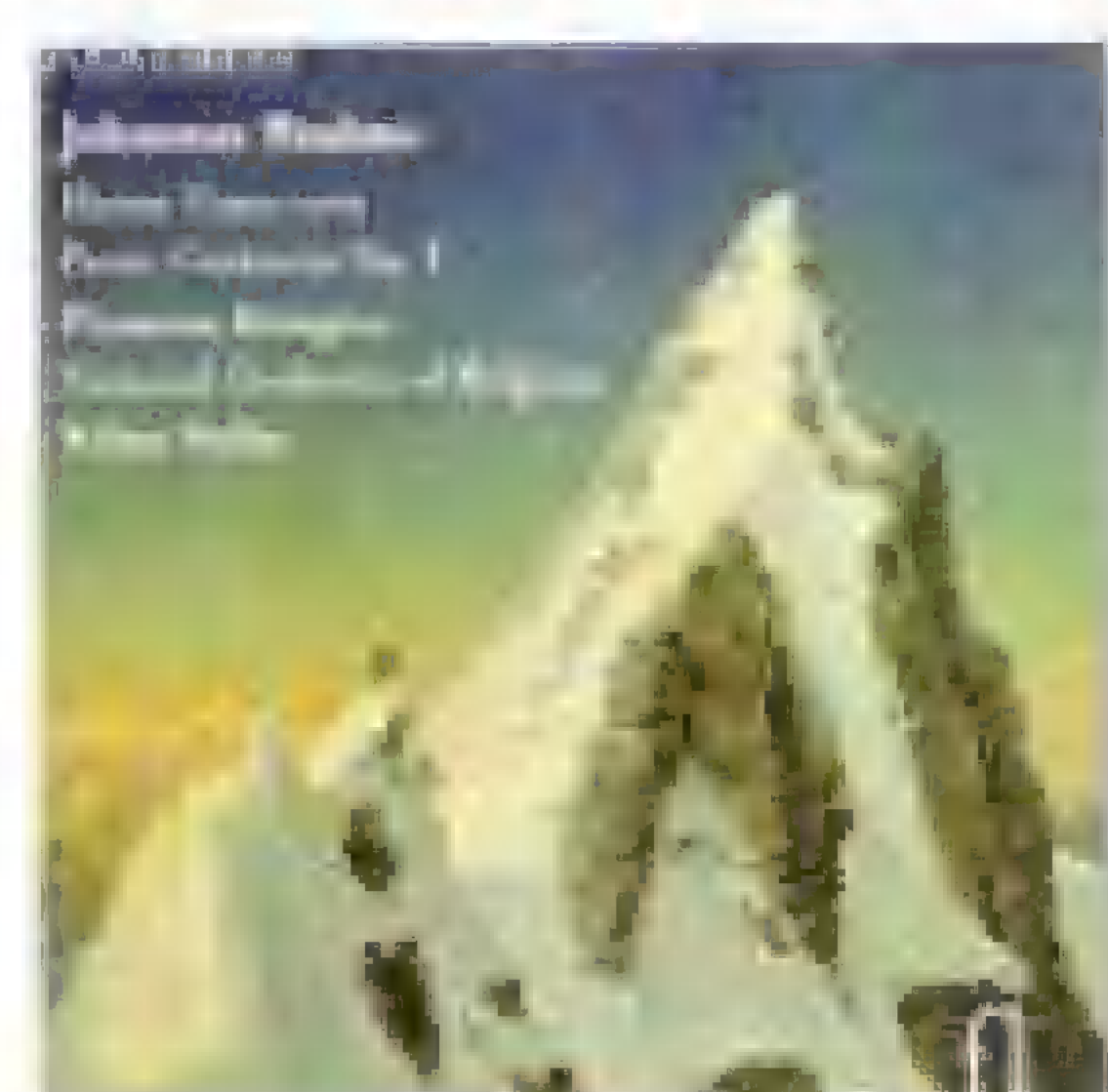
Piano Concerto No 1, Op 15. Variations on a Theme by Haydn, 'St Antoni Chorale', Op 56a

*Plamena Mangova *pf*

Belgian National Orchestra / Walter Weller

Fuga Libera ® FUG573 (70' • DDD)

A serious approach to Brahms's First unfolds with naturalness and dignity



The lion's share of this recording goes to Brahms's First Piano Concerto in which Plamena Mangova, a young Bulgarian pianist, is partnered by Walter Weller and the Belgian National Orchestra.

Yet "leonine" is not the word to describe Mangova's serious and musicianly approach to Brahms's epic elegy, always suggesting the trauma Brahms suffered after the attempted suicide of his beloved Schumann. Everything unfolds with naturalness and dignity, and in an age where many pianists are anxious to impress with superficial means, she achieves a moving and reassuring note. Weller's opening is truly *maestoso* and if both artists lack the thrust and impetus of other more inclusive and extrovert teams (Kapell and Mitropoulos or Fleisher and Szell, to name but two), their performance is none the less authentically Brahmsian and full-blooded. Mangova's entry (music which Tovey considered as profound as Bach's *St Matthew Passion*) is calm and inward-looking, and her expansiveness and musicianship in the famous cannonade of octaves is a far cry from a more obvious virtuosity. Her poise and restraint in the central *Adagio* are unfaltering and, more generally, nothing tempts her into excess.

On the purely orchestral front Weller (long of Vienna but now based in Brussels) is notably sensitive to the *Haydn* Variations' rich variety. Whether suitably pensive in the flow of Var 5, vivacious in Var 6's game of tag or warmly affectionate in the haunting *grazioso* of Var 8, he remains an outstanding Brahmsian. The sleeve suitably shows a formidable mountain peak and if Fuga Libera's sound is less than vivid or exceptional, it remains satisfactory.

Bryce Morrison

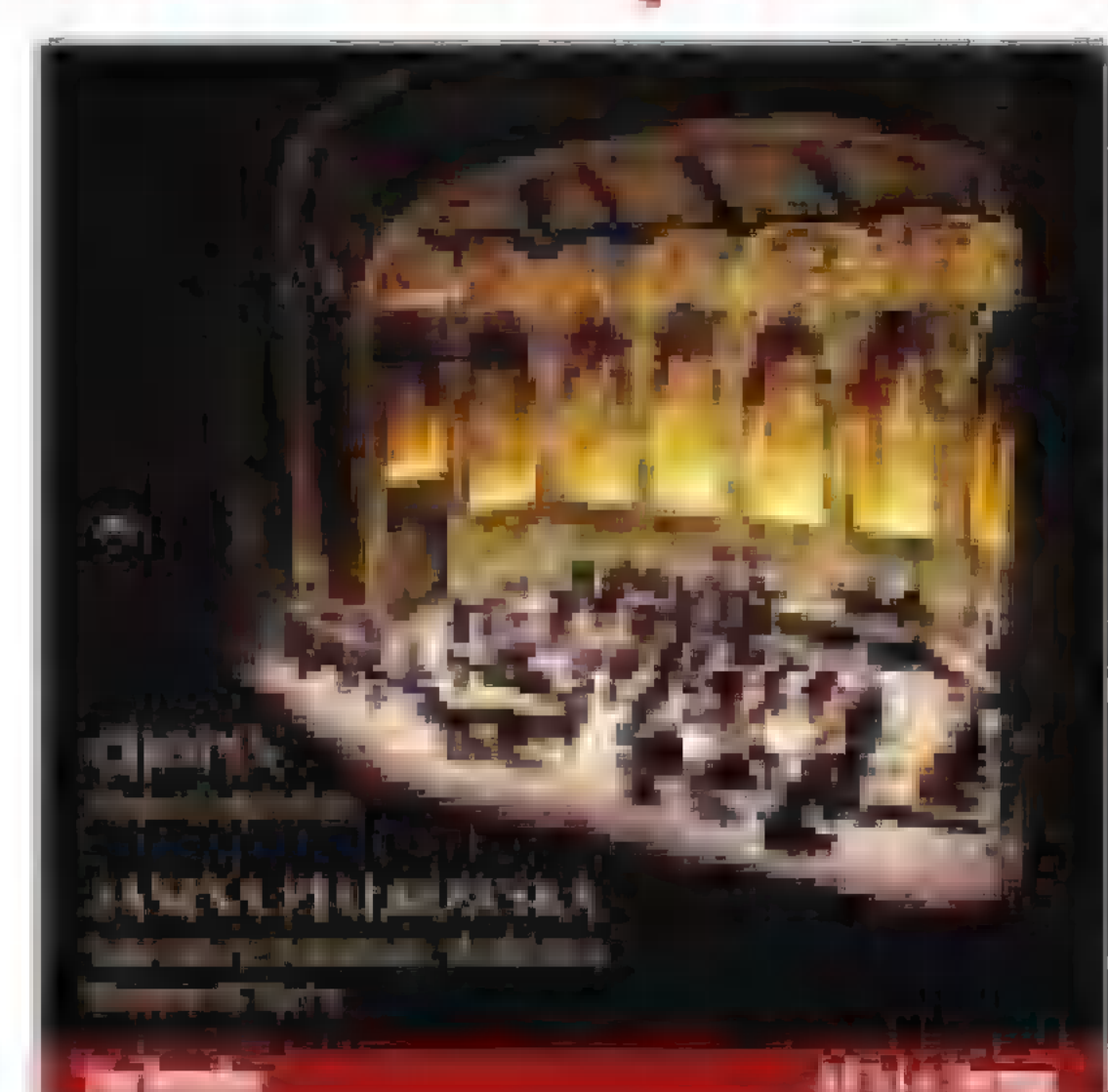
Chopin

Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 11; No 2, Op 21

Janina Fialkowska *pf* Vancouver Symphony Orchestra / Bramwell Tovey

ATMA Classique ® ACD2 2643 (68' • DDD)

Chopin with a chill from a Canadian pianist and orchestra



After a career-threatening illness, Janina Fialkowska returns to the concert stage sounding supremely confident and assured. And here, in

live performances of the Chopin concertos given in their true original order (first No 2, then No 1), she displays a formidable mastery, taking Chopin's early poetic ardour firmly in hand. Bramwell Tovey and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra are wholly at one with their commanding soloist, with a brisk view of Chopin's *maestoso* direction in the F minor Concerto's opening *tutti* and setting the stage for performances of an arresting brilliance. At the same time, Fialkowska has a sharp edge to her notion of Chopin's early Romanticism and there are moments when she can sound brusque and overbearing, with little time for whispered confidences and gentle asides. The sheer voltage is exhilarating (try the last pages of the F minor Concerto for a show of imperious technique that even the most seasoned virtuoso might envy), even when it extends to slow movements brimming over with first love and a pianistic reworking of the *bel canto* tradition.

For Fialkowska, the E minor Concerto's central "Romance" is hardly about moonlit reverie, and if her vehemence erases all possible sentimentality, it also removes too much genuine sentiment. Her technique is awe-inspiring and engulfing; but a frost seems to have settled over both performances and you only have to turn to recordings by Argerich (with Dutoit – EMI, 4/99) and Perahia (Sony, 6/90), for example, to hear playing of greater warmth, flexibility and, more subjectively, sheer magic. ATMA Classique's sound is bright and clear.

Bryce Morrison

Handel

'The Gentleman's Flute'

Alcina – Tornami a vagheggiar; Verdi prati; Un momento di contento; Musette; Credete al mio dolore; Di te mi rido. **Alexander Balus** – Convey me to some peaceful shore. **Amadigi di Gaula** – Tu mia speranza. **Giulio Cesare in Egitto** – V'adoro, pupille. **Rinaldo** – Overture; Il vostro maggio; Lascia ch'io pianga; Sulla ruota di fortuna; Bel piacere; Venti Turbini. Saul – Sinfonia. Sonata, HWV360 Op 1 No 2

Stefan Temmingh *rec ensemble* (Olga Mishula *psaltery* Olga Watts *hpd* Domen Marinčič *va da gamba* Lyndon Watts *bn* Axel Wolf *lte/theo* Loredana Gintoli *hp*)

Oehms Classics ® OC772 (64' • DDD)

Handel arias arranged for recorder and ensemble – but his class shines through



Interviewed in the booklet, Stefan Temmingh makes the point that, with no televisions, CDs or cinemas, the music-loving middle classes of the 18th-century had to make their own entertainment: "If you wanted to hear 'Lascia ch'io pianga' you couldn't put on a recording,

but you could play it on your recorder." Quite so. So why, today, when you can access an entire Handel opera in your home without a single music lesson, would you want to buy a collection of opera tunes in the commercial arrangements London publishers rushed out to keep 18th-century amateurs happy?

Well, it helps that this is Handel, of course; melodies like "Tornami a vagheggiar", "Verdi prati" and "Bel piacere" will never lose their catchy appeal. Then there is the fact that these are for the most part thoroughly engaging performances in which Temmingh uses a sure sense of line, judicious ornamentation and joyfully muscular and woody tone to ensure that every aria has character and inner life. And though the recorder is always out front, a varied line-up of accompanying instruments has you looking forward to finding out what colours will come next. The choices are shrewd: a lute or harp helps on the rare occasions when Temmingh's recorder lacks the necessary vocal fluidity, as in "Verdi prati" or "Lascia ch'io panga"; the racket put up by bassoon, psaltery, harpsichord and theorbo in "Venti turbini" achieves a unique kind of heroic splendour; and some numbers, such as "Un momento di contento" or "Credete al mio dolore", begin to sound as if they were always meant to be this way. For good measure there is a real recorder sonata in here, lent porkily robust support from a bassoon on the bass-line. All good, clean fun which in no way sells Handel's melodic genius short. **Lindsay Kemp**

Järnefelt

Berçuse^a. Serenade. Suite. Symphonic Fantasy
Lahti Symphony Orchestra / Jaakko Kuusisto ³vn
BIS © BIS-CD1753 (77' • DDD)

**A delightful quartet of works
by Sibelius's brother-in-law**



Although he lived until 1958, Armas Järnefelt's compositions cluster mostly in the two decades either side of 1900. The pretty *Berçuse* (1904) which concludes the programme is less ubiquitous than it used to be, like the little *Praeludium* (not included here) which was also once popular. It more or less single-handedly kept the composer's name in the catalogue until Ondine released their excellent Lieder disc in 2003. *Berçuse* is neatly played here, with conductor Jaakko Kuusisto multi-tasking by taking up his violin.

The other works on the disc are much larger in scope and pre-date the turn of the century. The Symphonic Fantasy (1895) is the most impressive, a 21-minute single span cogently argued. The structure, however, is episodic, and while the treatment of the material point-to-point is symphonic, its organisation is distinctly not. That said, it is an effective concert piece (it was roundly slammed at its



Lively concertos from the Harpist to the Prince of Wales

Debussy • Glière • Mozart

Debussy Danse sacrée et danse profane **Glière**
Harp Concerto, Op 74 **Mozart** Concerto for
Flute, Harp and Orchestra, K299^a

Claire Jones *hp* ^a**William Bennett** *fl*
English Chamber Orchestra / Paul Watkins
Signum © SIGCD216 (67' • DDD)



Mozart's Flute and Harp Concerto is here given an unusually lively performance with Paul Watkins and the ECO. Yet the Glière and Debussy items also emerge at their freshest, very well recorded to bring out the crispness of ensemble.

This performance of Glière's Concerto has made me revise my earlier impressions of it as a rather dull work. The themes may not match those of Glière's contemporary, Rachmaninov, but each movement is well

crafted. The result is tuneful and passionate in the extended first movement, easily lyrical in the second. The finale relies on themes with a folk flavour, culminating in an excitingly brisk coda.

Debussy's *Dances* were commissioned for a competition promoting the development of the chromatic harp, one which eliminated the need for complex pedal movements. The instrument's unforeseen disadvantages quickly put paid to its chances, though these two evocative pieces emerge effectively when played on the conventional modern harp.

The Mozart brings in the distinguished flautist William Bennett and the result is a delight. This account of the work is light-hearted and full of fun, and warmly songful in the central slow movement. The technical problems are brushed aside and the pure joy of Mozart at his most carefree comes over exceptionally well. It perfectly crowns a disc splendidly celebrating the artistry of Claire Jones. **Edward Greenfield**

INTERVIEW

Claire Jones

Creating a concerto album is something I have wanted to do for a long time. In 2007, after I got the job of Royal Harpist to the Prince of Wales, I performed the Mozart for the Prince and the Duchess. As soon as I had the opportunity to record a concerto disc, it seemed logical that this work would be on it, and the Debussy, too – in the harp world, people expect you to have recorded both. But I wanted to do a third piece that was relatively unknown. The Glière hasn't been recorded that often and I'm a little bit stuck as to why – I love the romanticism of it. I discovered the piece through an old recording by Osian Ellis given to me by William Bennett, the ECO's principal flautist, who I'd performed the

Mozart with for the Prince in 2007. As soon as I heard it, I thought, "That's the concerto!" The piece is very "harpistic" in terms of how it's written – it falls easily under the hands – but there is plenty of virtuosity too, to show the harp in a good light.

For the Prince I play lots of solo recitals, but to play concertos successfully as a harpist, you have to project – in fact, you have to work your socks off! On the other hand, it's a balance: if you pluck the strings too hard it can sound harsh. What you really need is an understanding conductor. Paul Watkins is incredibly in tune with what needs to happen so he was a big support, and the ECO played incredibly sensitively, too.

Interview by Sarah Kirkup

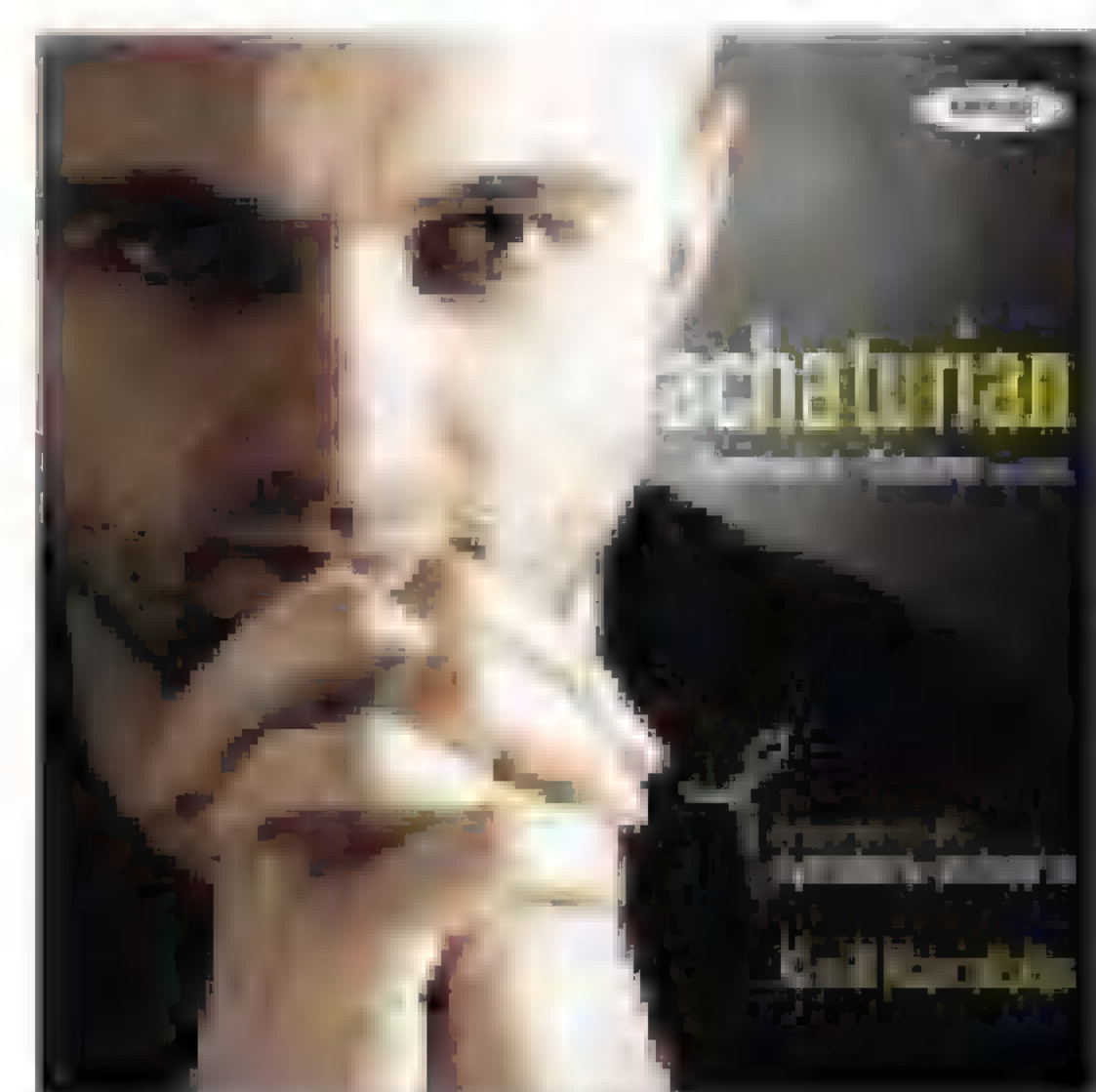
premiere), not wildly original in idiom and in debt to Wagner rather than Sibelius. The Suite in E flat was written two years later and casts its net wider in terms of influences (I will not spoil your fun in playing spot the composer). Once again, it is a viable concert piece, strong in appeal if a touch anonymous.

Järnefelt's Serenade (1893) was the best-received of the three larger works and has some undeniably effective moments, but to my mind is not the sum of its parts. It is significantly longer (a touch too long) with the same stylistic magpie-like tendencies. The performances are splendid and BIS's recorded sound is first-rate. Recommended. **Guy Rickards**

Khachaturian

Gayaneh – Dance of Friends; Carpet Embroidery Scene; Lezginka; Uzundara; Dance of the Girls; Scene and Dance; Aysha and Gayaneh; Aysha's Monologue; Dance of the Mountaineers; Sword Dance; Hopak. Spartacus – Introduction; Adagio of Aegina and Harmodius; Variation of Aegina and Bacchanalia; Scene and Dance with Crotala; Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia; Dance of the Gaditanian Maids
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra / Kirill Karabits

Onyx ® ONYX4063 (73' • DDD)



I remember an HMV 78rpm record arriving in the immediate post-war era containing three dances from *Gayaneh*, including the celebrated “Sabre Dance”, which

caused an immediate sensation and straight away becoming a popular classical hit. Around the same time Max Rostal premiered the Violin Concerto (Khachaturian's finest work) in London and I thought a major new Russian composer had arrived. But it was not to be. Much of his music is disappointing. Robert Layton wrote of the Second Symphony: “Its musical value is roughly in reverse proportion to the amount of noise made (and it is a very loud and very long score indeed)”. It was obvious from a complete RCA recording of the original score of *Gayaneh*, by the National Symphony Orchestra under Tjeknavorian, that *Gayaneh* was his finest extended work. Alas, later the composer rescored its music, not always to advantage. However, Khachaturian came to the West in 1962 and recorded superbly for Decca five items from *Gayaneh* and four from its successor, *Spartacus*, with the Vienna Philharmonic. Subsequently the BBC used the spectacularly beautiful “Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia” (truly worthy of Tchaikovsky) as theme music for their TV production of *The Onedin Line*. But my later visit to a Russian production of *Spartacus* itself in London revealed that it was very long, its music uneven and its choreography often spectacularly vulgar. All this is a preamble to

the present disc, so outstandingly played by the excellent Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under Kirill Karabits.

He is totally sympathetic to Khachaturian's music and includes most of the best numbers from both ballets, including, from *Gayaneh*, the “Lezginka”, “Dance of the Girls”, an engaging “Scene and Dance”, the deliciously sinuous pas de deux for “Aysha and Gayaneh” and “Aysha's Monologue”. The playing truly catches the eastern Armenian flavour which makes Khachaturian's music so seductive. The selection from *Spartacus* includes six highlights including the Introduction to Act 2 and “Dance of the Nymphs”, the delicate “Adagio of Aegina and Harmodius”, the contrasting, sprightly “Variation of Aegina and Bacchanalia”, the “Scene and Dance with Crotala” and a superbly passionate account of the justly famous “Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia”. This is now easily the best disc of Khachaturian's ballet music in the catalogue, full of vibrant life and seductive lyricism, and the recording (made this year in the Lighthouse, Poole) is first class in every respect. Not to be missed. **Ivan March**

Lyapunov

Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 4; No 2, Op 38. Rhapsody on Ukrainian Themes, Op 28
Shorena Tsintsabadze pf Russian Philharmonic Orchestra / Dmitry Yablonsky
Naxos © 8 570783 (59' • DDD)

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Milne, BBC Scottish SO, Brabbins (3/03) (HYPE) CDA67326

He may not be a major composer but Lyapunov's music is still worth hearing



Lyapunov's two piano concertos stand among the many pleasant foothills in the mountain range of the Russian tradition. Although

written at the age of 30, the first (1890) is only his Op 4, and in its alternation of dreamy and runabout moods, and frank imitations of Chopin, Liszt and Balakirev, it sounds very much like the work of an eager student. Nearly 20 years later, Lyapunov was more adept in stitching together his ideas, which now have more breadth and flow, if hardly any more individuality. Once again, just as the music seems to be gathering speed for lift-off, it is weighed down by academic cliché, and the piano-writing itself palls mightily beside the likes of Rachmaninov.

Both works could justly have been entitled rhapsodies, without misrepresenting their structure or expressive horizons. Composed in 1907, the *Rhapsody on Ukrainian Themes* itself is probably the most enjoyable – because least pretentious – music on the disc and is certainly worth a hearing, if only to discover where Rachmaninov may well have found the main first movement theme for his Third

IN THE STUDIO

Sydney Souvenir

Canadian violinist James Ehnes, no stranger to acclaim from *Gramophone's* critics (see our review of his Mendelssohn Concerto on the opposite page), continues to make high-profile additions to his discography on the Onyx label, most recently joining the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Vladimir Ashkenazy to record Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto. The sessions took place in December and the disc, due out in November, also contains the *Valse-Scherzo*, *Sérénade mélancolique* and – with Ashkenazy stepping from the podium to the piano – the *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*.

My kind of Gál

Hans Gál's music has been increasingly attracting the attention of musicians and recording companies of late, the Avie label leading the way with recent recordings of his works for violin with both piano and orchestral accompaniment. Kenneth Woods conducted his Violin Concerto and Concertino (9/10), and in November gave the first performance since 1955 of the Third Symphony with the Orchestra of the Swan. The same players have since made the first recording of the work, with a spring release date in mind (coupled with the Third Symphony of Schumann, a composer about whom Gál wrote extensively).

Spanish sessions

Charles Ramirez, professor of guitar at the Royal College of Music in London since 1978, has struck a deal with Signum Records to record the masterpieces of the instrument's repertoire. He kicks off an initial series of five discs with Rodrigo's two best-known guitar concertos, the *Concierto de Aranjuez* and the *Fantasia para un gentilhombre*. For the recordings last autumn in Pamplona he was joined by the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Douglas Boyd, and the disc is due out in March.

Sonata, song, strings

As this issue of *Gramophone* goes to press, teams from Onyx records are limbering up for a mini Schubert marathon. Shai Wosner is recording a pair of piano sonatas (D840 and 850) along with some smaller works at the idyllic Wyastone Concert Hall in Monmouth, while Florian Boesch and Malcolm Martineau are taking a winter's journey to East Finchley to record *Winterreise* – both discs due to be issued in September. Shortly afterwards, Onyx's technicians will be flying to Russia to capture Yuri Bashmet's Moscow Soloists not in Schubert but in string orchestra works by Dvořák, Janáček, Bartók and Enescu.

Piano Concerto two years later. In short, this is excellent fare for background listening and for filling gaps in one's knowledge.

Moscow-born Shorena Tsintsabadze gives direct, well-schooled accounts of all three works, playing them for what they are worth but not more. In the same coupling Hamish Milne and the BBC Scottish display a good deal more finesse and élan, and for my money the extra layout is easily worth it. But the newcomer is perfectly serviceable.

David Fanning

Mahler

Symphony No 4

Rosemary Joshua *sop* Champs-Élysées

Orchestra / Philippe Herreweghe

PHI © LPH001 (53' • DDD)

Selected comparison:

Komsi, Stuttgart Rad SO, Norrington

(10/06) (ILANS) CD93 164

Philippe Herreweghe launches his new label with a gently radical Mahler Fourth



It's business as usual, notwithstanding Philippe Herreweghe's change of label, and this scrupulously prepared, gently radical

take on a familiar score could well appeal to those not normally drawn to the composer.

"Authentic" or not, today's Mahlerians have plenty of elbow-room. As Jeremy Barham points out in the accompanying booklet, notions of authenticity in Mahler are more than usually fraught when his acolytes conducted the Fourth in such radically different ways. We are also reminded that the man himself dared to improve on Beethoven's scoring (odd then that no room has been found to print the text of Mahler's finale.) Applying a historical performance perspective to the modern instruments of his Stuttgart ensemble, Sir Roger Norrington's live recording was X-ray bright, whereas Herreweghe, taking his cue from the less weighty period sonorities of his Orchestre des Champs-Élysées, is softer-grained, with individual players placed in a fair-sized acoustic space.

At first I thought the endeavour might register as excessively low-key, Herreweghe's podium persona being so undemonstrative, yet everything unfolds with seductive song-like grace. The potential for radical discontinuity in the opening bars is not seized and the bucolic woodwind make their points without strain, quieter moments gently sweetened, never thickened, by the use of gut strings. In spite of a momentary intonation problem from the leader and some (authentically?) unpredictable penetration from the brass, the playing is often ravishing, the slow movement more naturally inflected than by Sir Charles Mackerras (Signum,



A revealing reading of a much-loved concerto

Mendelssohn

Violin Concerto, Op 64^a. Octet, Op 20^b

James Ehnes *vn* ^bMusicians of the Seattle

Chamber Music Society (Erin Keefe, Andrew

Wan, Augustin Hadelich *vn*s Cynthia Phelps,

Richard O'Neill *vas* Robert deMaine, Edward

Arron *ves*) ^aPhilharmonia Orchestra /

Vladimir Ashkenazy

Onyx © ONYX4060 (58' • DDD)

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Hope, COE, Hengelbrock (11/07) (DG) 477 6634GH

Concerto – selected comparison:

Bell, Camerata Salzburg, Norrington (8/02) (SONY)

SK89505

Hahn, Oslo PO, Janowski (4/03) (SONY) SK89921

Mutter, Gewandhaus Orch, Masur (5/09) (DG)

477 8575GH



Bringing something new to established repertoire: surely that's the ultimate test of any artist. If so, James Ehnes has done it again, in a

Mendelssohn coupling identical to Daniel Hope's (though the British violinist performed the unfamiliar earlier edition of the Concerto).

The first thing that hits you about Ehnes's reading is the rhythmic propulsion of the concerto's outer movements, which lifts the music, revealing its glorious bone structure.

In the hands of lesser musicians than Ehnes and Ashkenazy this could simply sound fast, yet there is so much compelling, beautifully observed phrasing that the effect is instead completely uplifting. It's there again in the first movement of the Octet, and once more the sense is of a joyous, exhilarating ride rather than anything overly driven. Ehnes is a musician of consummate imagination (and technique!) coupled with a lack of ego that is completely winning. Just sample the way he and his Seattle Chamber Music colleagues judge the coda of the Octet's *Allegro moderato ma con fuoco*. *Con fuoco* indeed.

Another aspect which is particularly winning is the creaminess of Ehnes's lower register, so you really appreciate the lows (literally) as well as the highs in the Concerto. The *Andante* movements of both works are characterised by a caressing but never cloying approach (a million miles away from Mutter's recent live recording of the concerto). I continue to return to Joshua Bell for his irresistible sound in the Concerto's slow movement, and to Hilary Hahn for a freshness comparable to Ehnes, but this is absolutely up there with the best of them.

As for the Octet, sample the *Scherzo* and see if you're not won over. Of course, everyone has their own favourite in this much-recorded work, but I certainly don't plan to live without this new version.

Harriet Smith

Orchestral reviews

1/11). The packaging accords band members an individual name check and they deserve it.

As for the finale, Herreweghe previously included “Das himmlische Leben” in his complete *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (Harmonia Mundi, 11/06), wherein Alan Blyth found the usually wonderful Sarah Connolly less than ideally suited to the song’s childlike sentiment. The soloist this time is another noted Handelian whose more appropriate vocal instrument, vibrant and silvery, is brought a little close by the otherwise unimpeachable sound team. **David Gutman**

Mellnäs

Labyrinthos^a. Passages^b. Symphony No 1^c

^aJörgen Pettersson *asax*; ^bGothenburg Symphony Orchestra / Marcello Viotti; ^cLatvian National Symphony Orchestra / Imants Resnis; ^dSwedish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Esa-Pekka Salonen Phono Suecia © PSCD175 (62’ • DDD)

A valuable portrait of a Swedish ‘ambassador’ for his country’s music



Swedish music has rarely enjoyed an international status and Stockholm-born Arne Mellnäs (1933-2002) proves to be no exception. Despite his humble beginnings,

he studied with an impressive roster of composers and was latterly a musical ambassador for his country.

Stylistically he falls into that easily underestimated category which, rather than blaze a trail, draws on a range of options in a music of and for its time: a composer steeped in his localised environment, while never in the least provincial.

Inspired by an Erik Lindegren poem, the First Symphony (1986) is the least successful piece – not so much through a lack of intrinsic quality but because its five movements fail to sustain a cumulative momentum, the work remaining an arresting sequence of vignettes in search of organic cohesion. Not so *Passages* (1989) which, taking its cue from a Walter Benjamin quote, amounts to a “tone-poem” in constant transition from the brief initial outburst that recurs understatedly on the way to a plateau of ruminative solos heard against a luminous backdrop. Even finer is *Labyrinthos* (1999), Mellnäs’s only concerto, whose three movements pursue an intricate formal trajectory and whose genesis in medieval verse is crystallised in climactic cadenzas that distil the expressive intensity.

Jörgen Pettersson is a formidable soloist, while the orchestral contributions in all three of these performances leave little to be desired. Neither do the recorded sound or the extensive booklet-notes, amounting to a valuable “portrait” of a composer whose acquaintance proves well worth making.

Richard Whitehouse

Mozart

Piano Concertos – No 24, K491^a; No 25, K503^b; No 26, ‘Coronation’, K537^c; No 27, K595^b

Alicia de Larrocha *pf*

^aChamber Orchestra of Europe;

^bLondon Symphony Orchestra / Sir Georg Solti Decca © 478 2420DX2 (128’ • ^bADD/“DDD)

Recorded ^b1977, ^a1985

Falla

Cuatro Piezas españolas. Fantasia Baetica.

El sombrero de tres picos – Suite.

El Amor brujo – Suite

Alicia de Larrocha *pf*

Newton Classics © 8802009 (55’ • ADD)

Recorded 1973. From Decca originals

A much-missed pianist sparkles in music with which she was closely associated



The diminutive Spanish pianist (four feet nine inches) died at the age of 86 in September 2009. Her repertoire extended from Bach to Rachmaninov but

it is with Mozart and Spanish music that she is most fondly associated.

Of Mozart’s last four piano concertos presented here, K503 and K595 were recorded

in 1977 in the much-missed Kingsway Hall. This is their first international CD release. K491 and K537 (a concerto Larrocha first played aged 11) were recorded in Henry Wood Hall eight years later but never released. The reason, producer Michael Haas reveals, was “due to misgivings [by both artists] about the acoustics of the studio”. Twenty-five years later this issue has been addressed and if there are any infelicities as a result of using only an initial edit, they have escaped my ears. In fact the acoustics of both venues (have been made to?) sound remarkably similar.

As to the more important issue of the music-making, it would be a strange person indeed who did not submit to such warm-hearted, unmannered Mozart. Nothing is driven, there are no “misplaced ‘Beethovenian’ heroics” (Jeremy Siepmann in his notes) or distracting idiosyncrasies. Larrocha’s pearly toned, lightly pedalled touch and the way she can taper a phrase ending to resemble musical speech (try the opening of K491) make these accounts ones to live with.

The Falla programme is a reissue of the pianist’s 1973 Decca recording (Kingsway Hall again) rather than her harsh-sounding selection for Hispavox/EMI made in the late 1950s. Larrocha does not play the music as much as inhabit it. The *Cuatro Piezas españolas*, inspired by Albéniz’s *Iberia*, are

given peerless performances. It’s a wonder they are not better known. The fourth of them, “Andaluza”, aptly prefaces the *Fantasia Baetica* (“Baetica” being the Roman name for Andalusia). Composed for Arthur Rubinstein, who gave the premiere and then abandoned it, it is not the most gratefully written piece for two hands but its vibrant colours, astringent harmonies and piquant, ever-changing rhythms make it one of the most evocative of showpieces. The suites derived from Falla’s two ballet scores, ending with the “Ritual Fire Dance”, round off this shortish but exceptional disc. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Mozart

‘Symphonies, Vol 8’

Symphonies – No 28, K200; No 29, K201; No 30, K202

Danish National Chamber Orchestra /

Adam Fischer

Dacapo © 6 220543 (67’ • DDD/DSD)

Some fine playing, admittedly, but is the focus on Mozart or Adam Fischer?



“A young girl gazes into the mirror. She has just returned from meeting her beloved and is finally convinced that he both loves her and needs her. She giggles mischievously

into the mirror and thinks: ‘For sure, he doesn’t know it yet, but wriggle though he might he will never escape my clutches!’” Thus Adam Fischer on the opening movement of the A major Symphony, K201, one of Mozart’s finest early masterpieces. Often it’s enlightening and instructive to hear a musician’s thoughts on the music he’s performing but Fischer’s odd musings – which are placed first in the booklet, before any notes on the music or the performances themselves – seem simply self-indulgent. As to the performance, the standard set in earlier instalments in this series (12/09, 1/10) is maintained, with special attention paid to viola lines (crucially important in Mozart), and the high horns let off the leash to provide joyous whoops of sound. Perhaps only the upper strings, less full-bodied here than in earlier volumes, might have benefited from an occasional retake.

The C major Symphony, K200, is a little marvel, its affirmative tone lent lustre by the presence of trumpets. The D major work, K202, again with trumpets, seems to rely more on galant sound effects than melodic inspiration but boasts moments of truly imaginative scoring. The performances are not free of Fischer’s now familiar interventionist meddling: he leans a little heavily on the trills in the opening figures of K200 but goes overboard with his cricket analogy – the insect, not the game – in the same work’s finale. In K202 he indulges his perverse fetish for using

solo strings in its Minuet and ingenious Trio, where this is not indicated (the solecism that became the primary gripe against his Nimbus Haydn cycle). Not for the first time, it is Fischer's self-indulgence that mars otherwise fine performances. **David Threasher**

Mozart

Violin Concertos – No 3, K216; No 5, K219.
Sinfonia concertante, K364

Christopher Moore *va* **Australian Chamber Orchestra** / **Richard Tognetti** *vn*

BIS © BIS-SACD1754 (80' • DDD/DSD)

Stylish, well-matched soloists, even if the orchestra simply follow



These are bright, lively performances, on modern instruments but well aware of 18th-century style. The finales of all three works are especially successful:

K216's is amiable and smiling; the minuet tempo of K219 is interpreted graciously, with the Turkish episode sounding particularly forceful and exotic, and in the *Sinfonia concertante*, a true *Presto* promotes a sense of unstoppable vitality.

There's sometimes a sense that whereas the two soloists always feel the music in a stylish way, the orchestra are just following instructions. Contrast, for example, Tognetti's thoroughly natural phrasing of the principal melody of K219's *Adagio* with the orchestra's more mannered delivery. Or consider the final bar of K216's first movement: it's good to avoid a thump on the final note but this sounds excessively polite – after all, it's an emphatic conclusion. I also find some of the detached notes too short; upbeat in the Rondo theme of K219's finale can be lifted without being so extremely short as they are here, and in K364's great *Andante* the accompanying quavers would, I think, be more in character were they not so ultra-detached. But this movement does have a strong vital pulse, providing a springboard for the passionate dialogue between violin and viola. Tognetti and Moore are wonderfully well matched, and when they play together in parallel their tones make a perfect blend. The Sinfonia's cadenzas (supplied by Mozart) are high-points of the performance. A very fine recording (which I've only listened to in CD stereo) contributes to a firm recommendation. **Duncan Druce**

F Schmidt

Symphony No 4. Variations on a Hussar's Song
Malmö Symphony Orchestra / **Vassily Sinaisky**
Naxos © 8 572118 (75' • DDD)

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

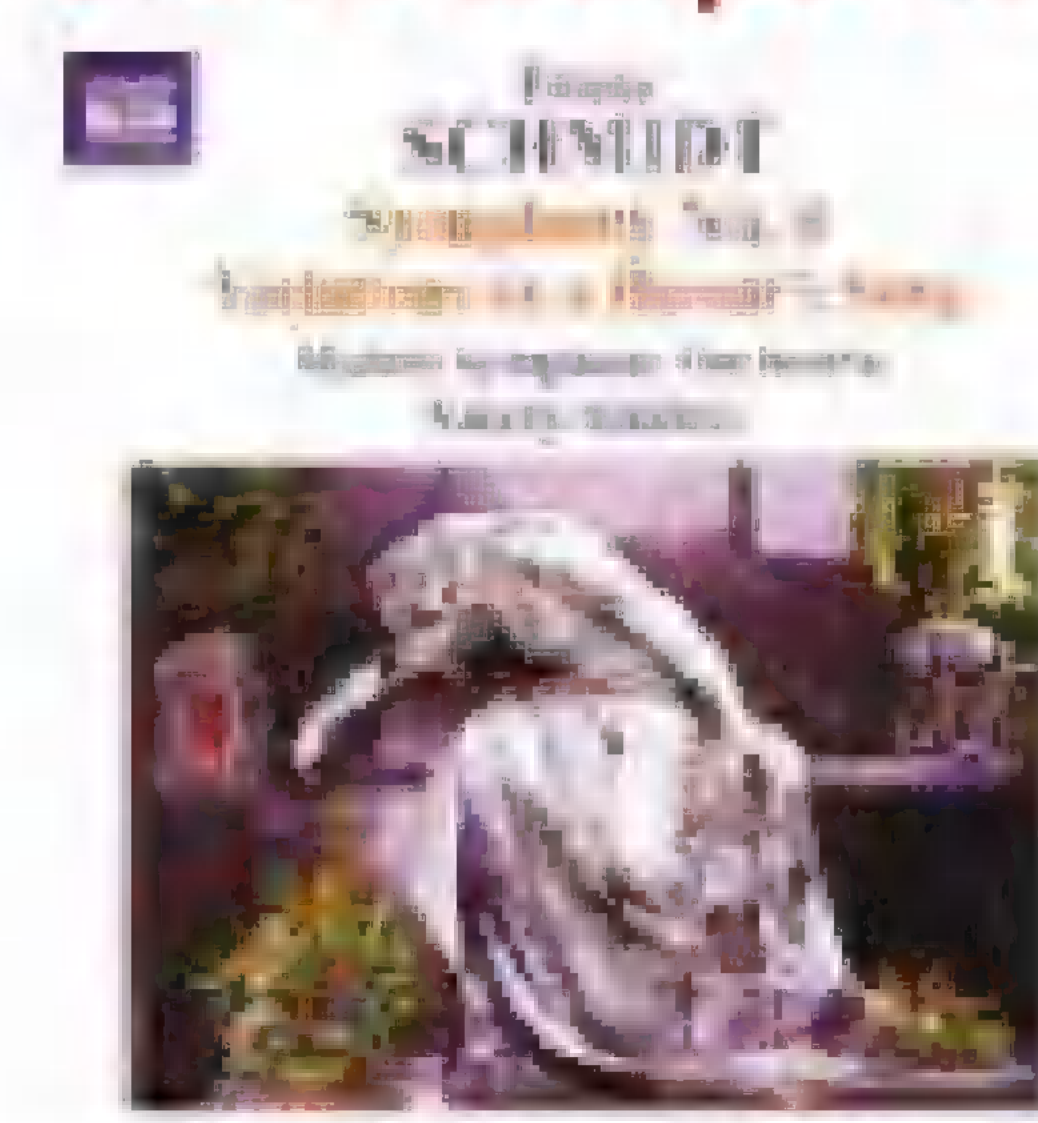
VPO, Welser-Möst (1/96) (EMI) 355693-2

Sym No 4 – selected comparisons:

Detroit SO, N Järvi (CHAN) CHAN9506

MDR SO, Leipzig, Luisi (QUER) VKJ0506

Sinaisky's Schmidt cycle tackles two of the composer's more elusive scores



Let there be no doubt, Franz Schmidt's Fourth (1933) is one of the finest of 20th-century symphonies. Its alternately winsome and tragic atmosphere,

where even the major instrumental solos bear autobiographical resonances, make it a very special work emotionally. Unapologetically lyrical and melodic from first bar to last, it is also very closely constructed, the themes deriving from the long opening trumpet solo (which instrument Schmidt played as a student). In design its four sections run continuously, built from three movements, the slow movement featuring prominent solos for Schmidt's own instrument, the cello. The recapitulation of the first movement is delayed and extended to form the finale. Even Liszt and Nielsen did not think of that!

Sinaisky's previous recordings in this series have shown him to be a most sympathetic Schmidt interpreter, albeit a touch cautious in choice of tempi. So generally it proves here – compare this account with Järvi's, which is four minutes swifter – and if I would have preferred a touch more impulsion in the *Allegro molto moderato*, Sinaisky undeniably makes his pacing work. I would still select Welser-Möst's beautifully played account with Schmidt's own Vienna Philharmonic as first choice in both the symphony and the *Hussar's Song* Variations (1930) but Sinaisky is a fine alternative and preferable to Luisi, who offers no coupling (Järvi has Strauss's symphonic fragment from *Josephslegende*). Naxos's sound is most serviceable without being spectacular and not as rich as the Chandos and EMI rivals. At super-budget price, though, this is unreservedly recommended. **Guy Rickards**

C Schumann • R Schumann

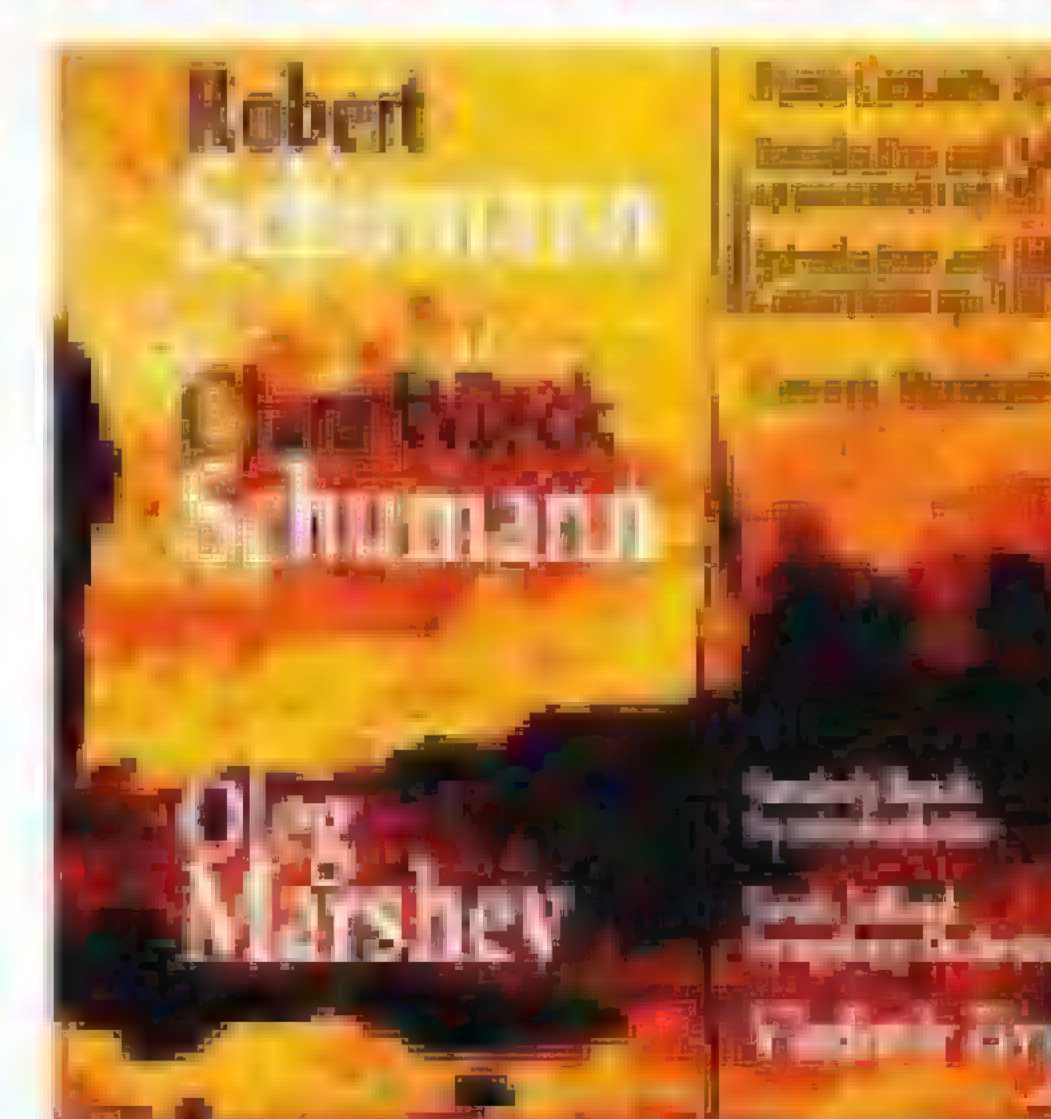
C Schumann Concertino **R Schumann**

Introduction and Allegro appassionato, Op 92.
Concert-Allegro with Introduction, Op 134.
Piano Concerto, Op 54


Oleg Marshev *pf* **South Jutland Symphony Orchestra** / **Vladimir Ziva**

Danacord © DACOCD688 (74' • DDD)

Two Schumanns – but Clara's unfinished concerto movement is a special attraction



The chief interest here is the uniting of Robert and Clara Schumann. And while Robert has the lion's share of the proceedings, Clara's F minor Concerto movement is a special attraction. As the useful booklet-note tells us, this curiosity seems



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The Dresden Music Festival is an official institution of the State Capital City of Dresden and is subsidized by the Saxon State Ministry for Higher Education, Research and the Fine Arts.

haunted less by Robert's genius than by Chopin's Second Concerto (also in F minor). Sadly incomplete, it was accompanied by Clara's forlorn cry, "a woman must not desire to compose – there has never yet been one able to do it. Should I expect to be the one?" But Clara was a highly gifted composer, as her completed Piano Concerto proves (something for Oleg Marshhev to consider), and I am grateful for his enterprise in making Jozef De Beenhouwer's performing version of Clara's work available on record.

This is played with much spirit and so, too, are Robert's piano-orchestral Opp 92 and 134, the former vintage Schumann with its yearning horn calls and burgeoning melodic beauty. On more familiar territory in the A minor Concerto, Marshhev keeps everything smartly on the move, a modern alternative to, say, Dame Myra Hess's justifiably famous view. But there are many more subtly persuasive, patrician and volatile accounts in the catalogue (Kempff, Lipatti and Argerich respectively), to say nothing of other distinguished readings (Kovacevich, Perahia, Lupu, etc). There is tough competition, too, from Perahia in the two shorter works for piano and orchestra. So the interest here lies firmly with Clara Schumann. The orchestra under Vladimir Ziva provides enthusiastic if at times tub-thumping partnerships, and Danacord's balance and recording are sound. **Bryce Morrison**

R Strauss

Oboe Concerto, Op 144^a.

Serenade, Op 7^b. Suite, Op 4^b

François Leleux *ob* ^bEnsemble Paris-Bastille;

^aSwedish Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Daniel Harding

Sony © 88697 74869-2 (57' • DDD)

^aRecorded live at Berwaldhallen, Stockholm.

February 13-14, 2009

A concerto from Strauss's Indian summer is complemented by two earlier works



In the summer of 1945 a group of American soldiers called on Richard Strauss at his villa in Garmisch. Among them was John de Lancie, who pre-war had been principal oboe with the Pittsburgh Orchestra. He expressed admiration to the composer and asked if he would consider writing an oboe concerto. Strauss categorically rejected the idea. But he obviously changed his mind soon afterwards, and the present work was premiered in Zürich in 1946. It is engagingly light-hearted, the outer movements very busy with a natural virtuosity, but delicately articulated here by François Leleux. The first movement has great charm. The *Andante* is a sad little song

without words; then follows a brilliant cadenza before the elegantly lively finale.

The pair of Wind Suites, however, date from the very beginning of Strauss's career. The Op 4 Suite is Baroque in derivation, with a Gavotte and a closing Introduction and Fugue, but the Op 7 Serenade of 1882 is rather fuller in sonority, with rich use of the horns and a feeling of "lyrical euphony", to quote the writer of the excellent booklet-notes, Guido Fischer. All the music is beautifully played here, with François Leleux leading the Ensemble Paris-Bastille spontaneously and elegantly. The Oboe Concerto is a live recording but all three works enjoy an ideal acoustic and are beautifully balanced. **Ivan March**

Tüür

Symphony No 6, 'Strata'. *Noësis*^a

^aJörg Widmann *cl* ^aCarolyn Widmann *vn*

Nordic Symphony Orchestra / Anu Tali

ECM New Series © 476 3799 (53' • DDD)

A haunting, hypnotising concerto and a brutal, aggressive symphony



The Tüür juggernaut powers on, as this vividly recorded offering of two quite recent large-scale works confirms. The broad-brush textural effects and spectacular sonic riffs – often ascribed to Tüür's days as a rock musician – continue to dominate, along with questions about where the substance, if any, of this music is really to be found. Like his older Estonian contemporary, Arvo Pärt, but much less austere, Erkki-Sven Tüür seeks to communicate feeling as directly and engulfingly as possible: and along with feeling there are the broader themes which the titles of his compositions identify.

Noësis, a concerto for clarinet, violin and orchestra (2005), aims high by invoking the Greek word for "thought". The role of reasoning is evident in the transparent processes of accumulation and elaboration by means of which Tüür weaves a musical fabric that can haunt, even hypnotise through its repetitive strategies, but can also irritate by holding back rather than developing its potentially immense propulsive energy. From this latter perspective the exuberant, even jazzy qualities of the ending come as a relief from, as much as a resolution of, the tensions set up from the beginning.

Strata, the title of the Symphony No 6 (2007), describes a geological rather than an intellectual structure, and the elemental force with which Tüür deploys his superimposed musical layers cumulates with well-nigh brutalist aggression, as if to represent some seismic catastrophe on a global scale. Is it all too monotonous rhythmically to justify a 32-minute duration? My answer would be

"yes"; but if such insistence doesn't bother you, these no-holds-barred performances should provide a mind-blowing experience.

Arnold Whittall

'Vivaldi & Friends'

Bach Concerto for Four Harpsichords and Strings, BWV1065 Vivaldi Concerto for Four Violins and Strings, Op 3 No 10 RV580. Violin Concerto, 'Summer', Op 8 No 2 RV315 (arr Sorrell). Double Concerto for Two Cellos and Strings, RV531. Trio Sonata, 'La follia', Op 1 No 12 RV63 Duchiffre 'Tango' Concerto for Two Violas da gamba and Strings

Apollo's Fire / Jeannette Sorrell *hpd*

Avie © AV2211 (75' • DDD)

Vivaldi and not-quite-Vivaldi in performances that lack a little fire



The latest of Avie's reissues of recordings by Cleveland-based Baroque orchestra Apollo's Fire was first issued on the Canadian label Eclectra only last year. Its neat and compact programme, mixing familiar pieces with more *recherché* items, seems designed more for the concert hall rather than for CD, but that should not matter if the music-making has powers to enthrall. It is a pity, then, that the better-known pieces – Vivaldi's Concerto for four violins, Op 3 No 10, and the Concerto for harpsichords that Bach arranged from it – have both received performances elsewhere on disc with a little more drive and, yes, fire.

Jeannette Sorrell's decision to follow Bach's example and do a little arranging of her own is an enterprising one – indeed a daring one when it comes to transforming "Summer" from *The Four Seasons* into a harpsichord concerto. Despite her skill, however, it is not a particularly successful exercise; the harpsichord's appropriation of Vivaldi's violin figuration sounds chuggy and foursquare, and the crying shepherd-boy loses his expressive charm. Better is Sorrell's orchestral arrangement of the *Folia* variations from Vivaldi's Op 1 Trio Sonatas, which with its mix of forward momentum and grandeur makes a worthy sister to Geminiani's better-known *Folia* Concerto after Corelli. A "real" Vivaldi piece surfaces in the form of the Concerto for two cellos, here given a firmly pointed but (in the first two movements at least) slightly sluggish performance. The disc concludes with a Double Gamba Concerto by Apollo's Fire cellist René Schiffer (assuming the pen-name of René Duchiffre) – an audibly obvious homage to Vivaldi, though had the Red Priest ever been tempted to write a tango finale, he surely would not have allowed it go on so long. An attractive enough disc, this, though not perhaps not as sparkling as its creators had hoped. **Lindsay Kemp**

ROUND-UP

Bruckner in Bavaria

Rob Cowan listens to Lorin Maazel's Munich cycle of the composer's symphonies

Of all the senior maestros treading the current concert circuit, **Lorin Maazel** is surely among the most unpredictable and his 1999 series of live performances with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (based on Nowak editions) has in some respects confounded my expectations. What were those expectations? In the main, a keen ear for detail, excellent execution and moments of visceral excitement, a warm projection of Bruckner's melodic lines and an understanding of the music's structure – in other words an intelligent, comprehensive hold on what the music is about without necessarily plumbing its depths or courting dangerous extremes. Well, I was wrong about the depths and the danger; all the other plus-points remain much as I expected them to be.

Over the years Maazel's approach to Bruckner has broadened considerably. This 1999 version of the Third has the advantage of bold and sonorous Bavarian brass and, in the *Adagio*, some extremely beautiful string playing. The 1889 Nowak score is used, which makes for a more concise finale. Maazel's approach to that finale is among the performance's high-points, with a litting account of the polka-style second subject and especially strong advocacy of the ingenious episode soon afterwards where echoing strings and brass conjure the acoustic of some vast cathedral.

Mention of cathedrals helps identify precisely where Maazel challenges those dusty old preconceptions, namely, and in spite of some very slow tempi, by taking Bruckner out of his churchly comfort zone and treating his symphonies much as he might the symphonies of Tchaikovsky, Schumann, Brahms, even at times Mahler. This trend is especially noticeable in the early works. The busily discursive First Symphony is presented in the "Linz" edition and enjoys a cracking performance of the *Scherzo*. "No O" is even more impressive: the doggedly slow opening, like a grim march,

lends the music a slightly sinister edge and I've never heard a more daringly broad account of the lovely Trio.

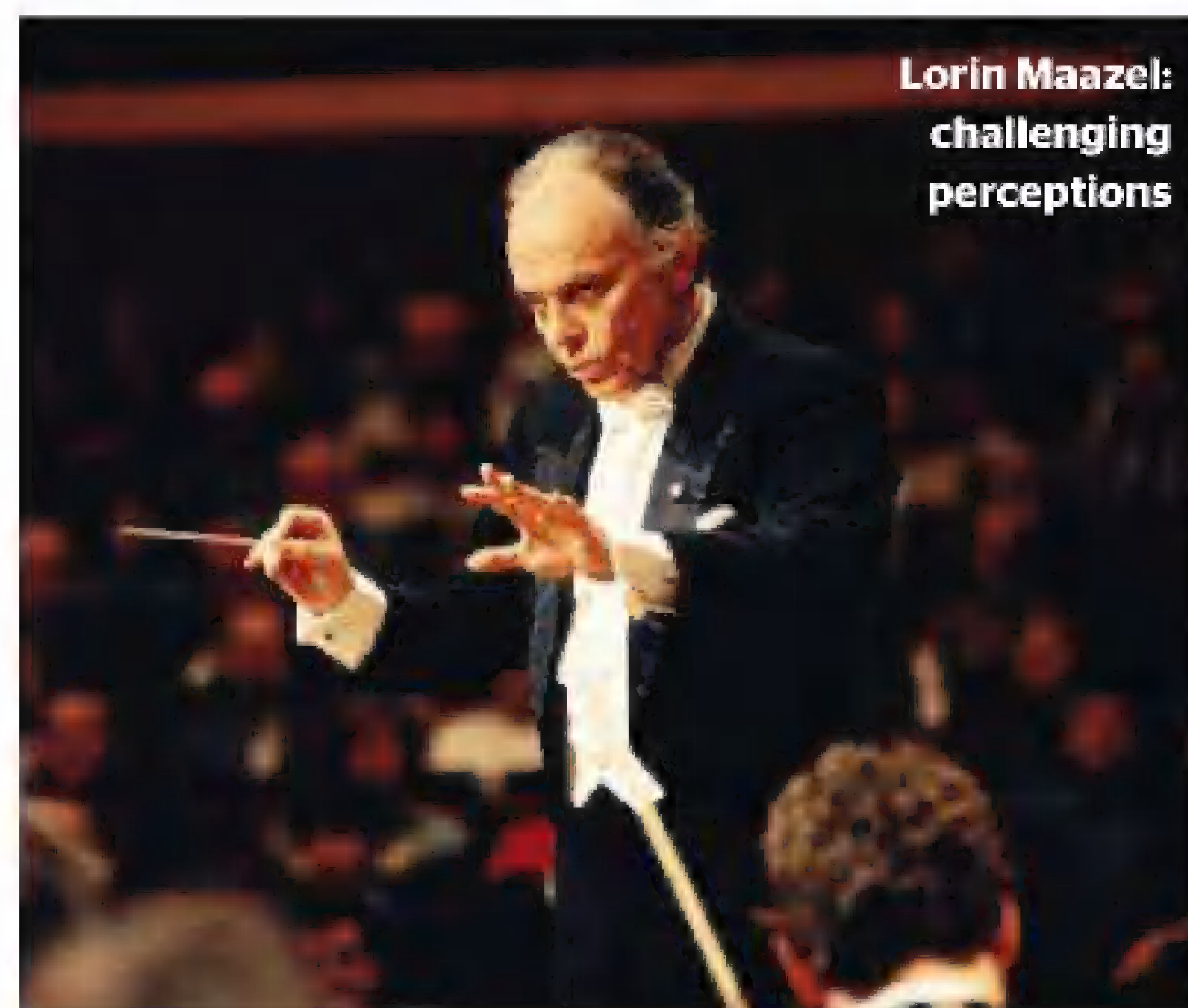
Maazel's Bruckner Second is considerably slower than most of his rivals but again the playing carries real conviction, at the start of the finale, for example, which opens delicately but climaxes with considerable power. Then there's the yearning motif that opens the symphony, and the trumpet that cuts across it, the effect here unusually sombre. Maazel seems to have taken enormous care in his preparation of each work, focusing its singular character as a starting-point: his approach to the Fourth recalling something of Karajan's grandeur, something of Jochum's volatility, but the *Scherzo*, although boldly played by the horns, is a little sedate.

In the Fifth Maazel faces newly released competition from another BR-Klassik release, a concert recording from last February where the conductor was **Bernard Haitink**, and from the latest instalment in **Dennis Russell Davies's** Bruckner cycle with the Bruckner Orchester Linz (2006). As to Haitink, it's interesting to note that, according to the Bruckner discography at www.abruckner.com, for a concert three days earlier his overall tempo had been 78'24" as opposed to the more "regular" total timing of 75'43" offered here (as a matter of interest, Haitink's famous Philips Concertgebouw recording, using a slightly different edition, tots up a fairly swift 72'33", his Vienna PO remake 77'00"). Comparing Haitink with the broader Maazel is instructive in more ways than one, mostly concerning the balance between the middle and the outer movements. Take the first two movements, where under Maazel the main body of the music is hardly *allegro*, and the *adagio* element of the second seems dictated more by a long, flowing line than by the specific tempo chosen for the *pizzicato* strings, which is relatively fast. The relation between the movements under Maazel is 23'09" next to 15'09", whereas with Haitink, whose

beautifully balanced approach is fairly characteristic of his Bruckner style overall, you have 20'31" against 16'07". There's a parallel – if less extreme – comparison between the two versions of the *Scherzo* and the finale. Throw Russell Davies into the mix, also recorded live, and he emerges as nearer Maazel than Haitink in terms of balance, although his orchestra lacks the polish and tonal bloom of the Bavarians. His virtues are clarity and rhythmic assertiveness, especially in the finale where the start of the first half of the fugue is appropriately muscular, but although the overall pacing is well judged, the sum effect of Davies's performance falls short of overwhelming.

Haitink allows the music to unfold, as if its architecture were a given and his job merely to clear away the mists of time. Maazel's is a more overtly characterful approach, most notably at the centre of the first movement, the statement of the principal theme at around 12'57", where he employs a massive, swaying gait. Haitink (at 12'15") is less extreme. Both conductors gauge the finale well, Haitink as always with a sure view of the whole terrain, while Maazel is freer tempo-wise and favours a more dramatic manner with dynamics. If you already have one or other of Haitink's available Fifts, I wouldn't necessarily advise swapping them for this one, though if you haven't, the magnificent playing of the BRSO and BR-Klassik's superb recording might tempt you to add what is in effect a major Bruckner interpretation to your collection.

Maazel's Sixth opens rather impatiently but once into its stride settles to a persuasive reading that generates both power and poetry. The *Adagio* is virtually Tchaikowskian in its feeling of impassioned elegy (try from 73'"), whereas the start of the *Scherzo* highlights one of the qualities I most enjoy about Maazel's Bruckner, namely an appreciation of Bruckner's musical patterns, in this case (and helped by some very pointed playing) the way the rising motif that opens the movement infiltrates the first big *tutti*. The Seventh Symphony



Lorin Maazel:
challenging
perceptions

is given a warm, flowing performance, with woodwinds kept expressively audible in the first movement's arching coda, while the finale's alternation of a jaunty main theme with a chorale-style second subject is very evenly judged.

In the last two symphonies tempi are sometimes stretched so far that the arguments threaten to snap, although the Trio to the Eighth's *Scherzo* is uncommonly swift. Here Maazel faces yet more competition from BR-Klassik themselves, in this case a 1977 Eighth under Rafael Kubelik (now available separately on 900703), a magnificent reading in all respects, heroic, transparent and, in the great *Adagio*, drawn with the subtlest of brush strokes. Maazel's Eighth is broader than Kubelik's by almost eight minutes (the differences in the editions used aren't too significant) and with a quite overwhelmingly intense two-tier climax to the *Adagio*. The first moment's coda is very imposing, but is it all just a little too theatrical? Certainly the first movement of the Ninth seems to be, a monumentally broad 31'17", a weighty, slow-motion

traversal, with a fairly "regular" *Scherzo* and a towering account of the *Adagio* third movement, perhaps the most satisfying episode in the whole cycle.

Summing up the pros and cons of this fascinating set is difficult. Was Maazel consciously recalling the older Celibidache's Bruckner tradition with the Munich Philharmonic? After all, the charismatic Romanian maestro had died merely three years earlier. Somehow I doubt it: although many of Maazel's tempi are slow, his style is more animated and outwardly demonstrative than Cel's, the points he makes less aimed at integration than demonstration. I suppose you could say he provides a highly stimulating "alternative set", one to place beside the colder beauty of Karajan (DG), the more temperate Wand (BMG) and Skrowaczewski (Arte Nova), the excitable (and at times ethereal) Jochum (DG or EMI), the elevated sobriety of Haitink (Philips) or the admirably clear-headed Volkmar Andreae (Music & Arts). It certainly gave me a great deal of enjoyment, much as attending the actual concerts would have done. 🎧

THE RECORDINGS

Bruckner Cpte Syms **Bavarian Rad SO / Maazel**
BR-Klassik Ⓢ ⓘ 900711

Bruckner Sym No 5 **Bavarian Rad SO / Haitink**
BR-Klassik ⓘ ⓘ 900109

Bruckner Sym No 5 **Bruckner Orchestra, Linz / Russell Davies**
Arte Nova ⓘ 88697 74977-2

Chamber

A prize-winning violinist • Russian piano trios • Three Schubert Octets

Ravel • Shostakovich

Ravel String Quartet

Shostakovich String Quartet No 5, Op 92

Navarra Quartet (Xander van Vliet, Marije

Ploemacher *vs* Simone van der Giessen *va*

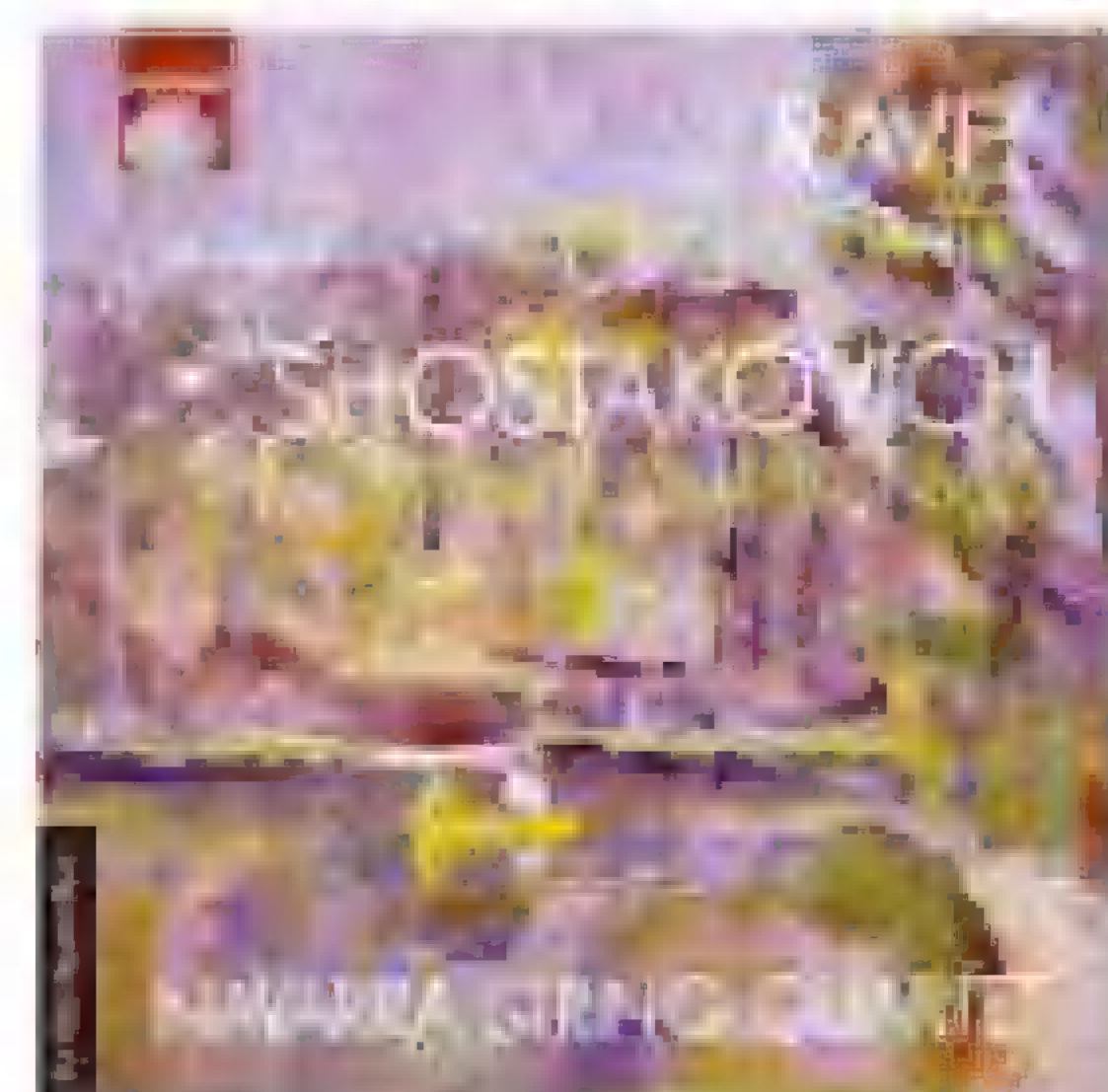
Nathaniel Boyd *vc*)

Sonimage © SON11002 (61' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Wyastone Concert Hall,

Monmouth, September 19-20, 2009

A quirky coupling but both works receive bold live performances



The prize-winning Anglo-Dutch Navarra Quartet is one of several first-rate young groups encouraged by the late Christopher Rowland at the Royal Northern

College of Music. Its previous recordings include highly praised renditions of Haydn's *Seven Last Words* (Alta), the first three quartets by Pēteris Vasks (Challenge Classics) and a collection of modern British music for clarinet quintet (Naxos). All those might seem more obviously collectible than the present disc, whose odd coupling immortalises ostensibly live performances (minus applause) given during the Wye Valley Festival in the acoustically superior Wyastone Concert Hall.

The Ravel is the more conspicuously successful of the chosen works, at times daringly spacious yet always magically fine-spun, the light, silvery tone of leader Xander van Vliet setting the tone for a reading of variety, delicacy and restraint. The finale, less extrovert and perhaps less hyper than that of the Quatuor Ebène (Virgin, 12/08), is satisfying in its own right.

I was only marginally less impressed by the Shostakovich, which may suit those who prefer a lighter sonority and a not-so-implacable quality of attack in this music. After an opening *Allegro non troppo* in which intonation is not quite faultless and the playing could be thought to lack weight, there's no mistaking the depth of feeling these musicians bring to the central slow movement and to the contemplative close of the piece. One of the composer's most concentrated "symphonic" inventions feels less monochrome, more inwardly expressive than usual, possibly no bad thing. While the microphones capture some breathing, the balance is excellent. **David Gutman**

Schoenberg • Sibelius

Schoenberg String Quartet No 1, Op 7

Sibelius String Quartet, 'Voces intimae' Op 56

Tetzlaff Quartet

(Christian Tetzlaff, Elisabeth Kufferath *vs*

Hanna Weinmeister *va* Tanja Tetzlaff *vc*)

CAvi-Music © AVI553202 (76' • DDD)

These players find the chill in the Sibelius but miss the sweep of the Schoenberg



Two D minor string quartets composed within four years of one another (Schoenberg's in 1905, Sibelius's in 1909) make for a thoughtful and thought-provoking programme. And they come in performances that are both carefully thought-out and scrupulously delivered.

At first it seemed to me that the Tetzlaff Quartet had gone for an especially narrow vibrato and white tone-quality to suit Sibelius's Nordic musical landscape. Theirs is certainly a resolutely non-indulgent response to the *Intimate Voices* of the long central *Adagio* at the heart of the work; but they also know precisely where to locate the stoical quality behind the following quasi-*scherzo*, as well as the qualified exhilaration of the finale, with its love-hate relationship with Tchaikovsky's *Serenade*.

Turning to the Schoenberg, I had my doubts, however, because here is that same lean-toned quality applied to a diametrically opposed expressive world. True, the teeming invention of Schoenberg's counterpoint benefits from a cooler, more measured approach than it generally inspires, and I certainly heard – and admired – more of the inner workings of the piece than I can ever remember. But where is the fire, where the sweep, where the sense of a man "thrown into an ocean of boiling water" (Schoenberg's self-assessment)? They are there, I suppose, but not nearly as potently as I would ideally want.

Over the full 45 minutes, I did manage to put aside that disappointment and concentrate on the lucid virtues of the playing, relishing also the poetry elicited from the slow movement. So I might well return to this account for demonstration purposes, especially since the current competition is not all that strong (the historic Kolisch Quartet recordings, wherever you can find them,

remain benchmarks, though you have to peer through dim mid-1930s sound quality). But for a sense of visceral excitement in the Schoenberg, and for a revelation of the fundamental contrast between two great musical temperaments, I hanker for something more than this well-disciplined, well-recorded and sadly not very well-documented issue. **David Fanning**

Schubert

Arpeggione Sonata, D821^a. Fantasie, D934.

Rondo brillant, D895. Violin Sonata, D574.

Violin Sonatas (Sonatinas) – No 1, D384;

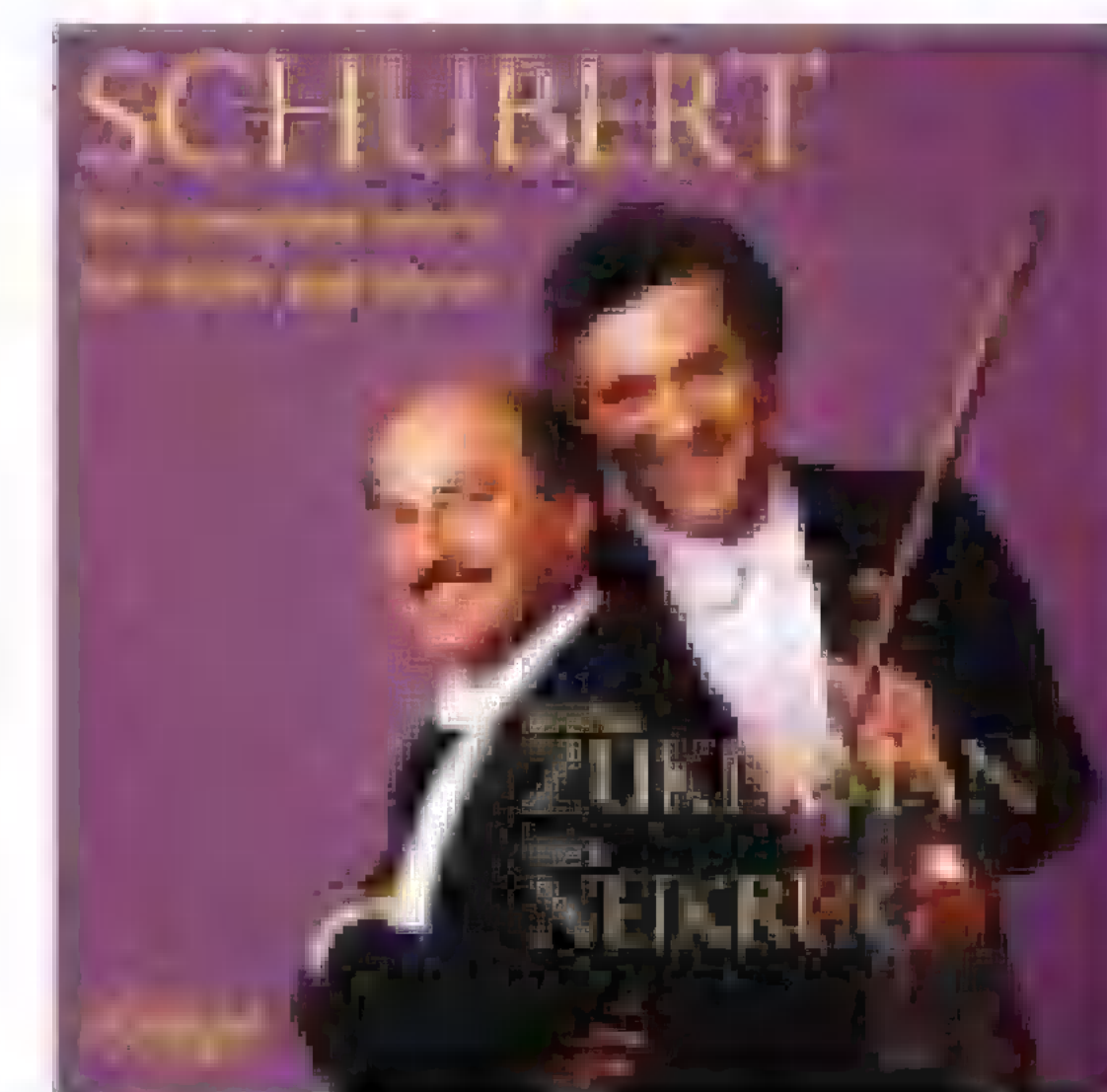
No 2, D385; No 3, D408

Pinchas Zukerman *vn/va* **Marc Neikrug** *pf*

Biddulph © 80250-2 (144' • DDD)

Recorded 1993-95

Polished playing but Zukerman's plush tone may not be to everyone's taste



These performances, recorded between 1993 and 1995, are notable for polish, astute musicianship and expressive character.

Both players favour full, rounded tone and an easy-going approach, with many tempi slightly slower than usual. The relaxed attitude is often an advantage – the opening *Allegro* of D408, with its constant changes of mood, gains in power by not seeming anxious or hurried, and it's an excellent idea to relax the speed in the coda of D385's finale, so accentuating the feeling of pathos. However, there are other places where the music demands a lighter or more brilliant interpretation – D408's Minuet, for example, or the virtuoso conclusions of the Rondo and the Fantasie.

Schubert frequently stipulates *pianissimo*: Zukerman and Neikrug seem unwilling to reduce beyond a certain point, and many of the more mysterious or intimate passages fail to make their full effect. One instance is where, just before the end of the Fantasie, Schubert recalls the theme of the preceding variation movement: Zukerman and Neikrug ignore the *pp*, making the recall seem no more than a formal, unifying device, whereas Martin Helmchen and Julia Fischer (Pentatone) give it the character of a distant memory, poetic and touching.

A further issue, for me, is Zukerman's vibrato. Without being such a purist as to

insist that continuous vibrato, a modern idea, has no place in Schubert, and while admiring Zukerman's lovely, sweet tone and the artistic way he varies it, I do feel that in many places a cooler, straighter sound would be more appropriate and beautiful. This is especially so in the Arpeggione Sonata; this is magnificent viola playing but surely the serene *Adagio* would benefit from a calmer sound. You may well feel differently, however, and I can assure you that all the playing is wonderfully accomplished. **Duncan Druce**

Ray Chen

JS Bach Solo Violin Partita, BWV1004 –

Chaconne **Franck** Violin Sonata

Tartini/Kreisler Violin Sonata, 'Devil's Trill'

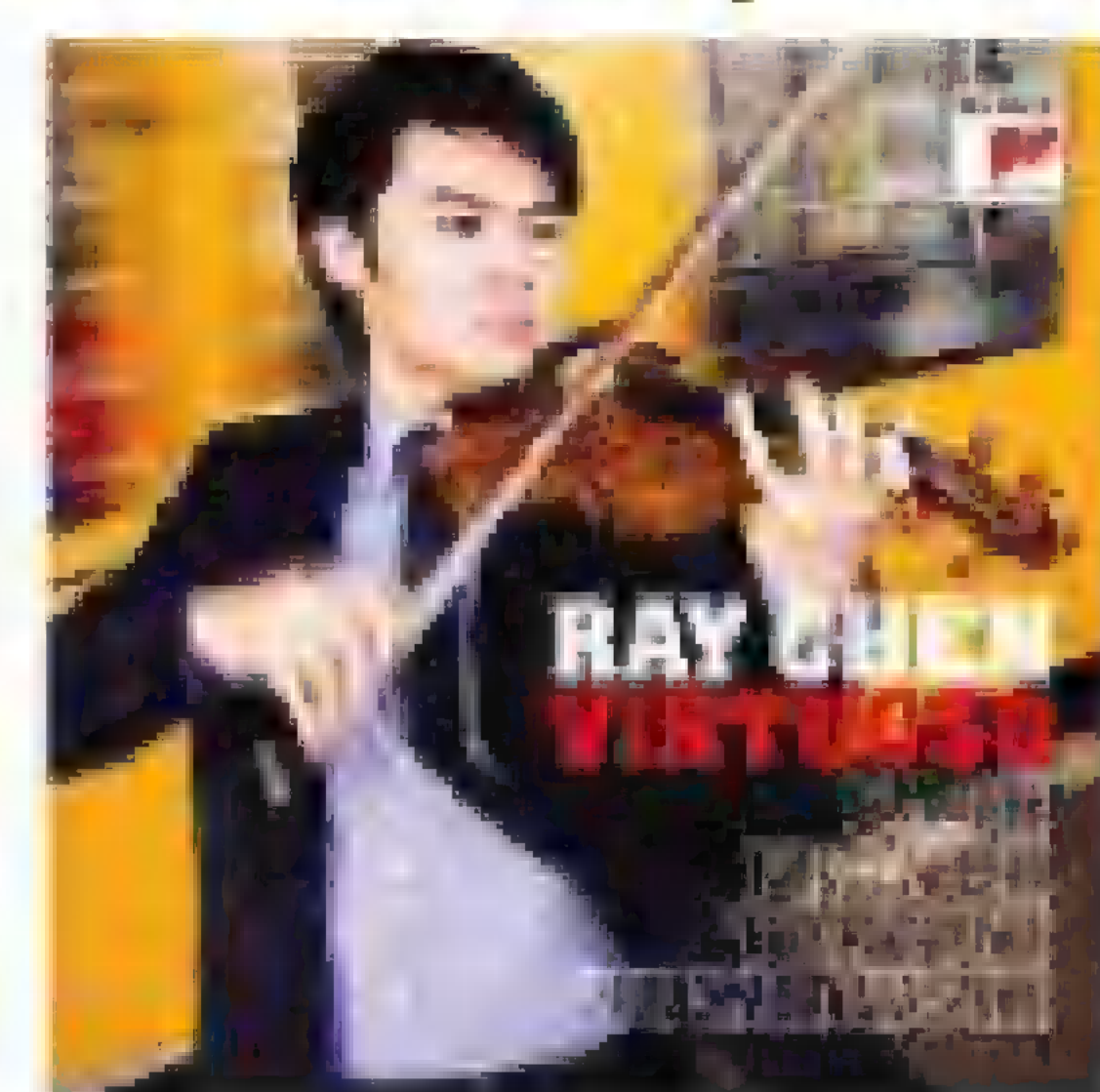
Wieniawski Variations, Op 15

Wieniawski/Saenger Légende, Op 17

Ray Chen *vn* Noreen Polera *pf*

Sony © 88697 72320-2 (79' • DDD)

Sony's new signing plays some fearsome music with polished flair and ease



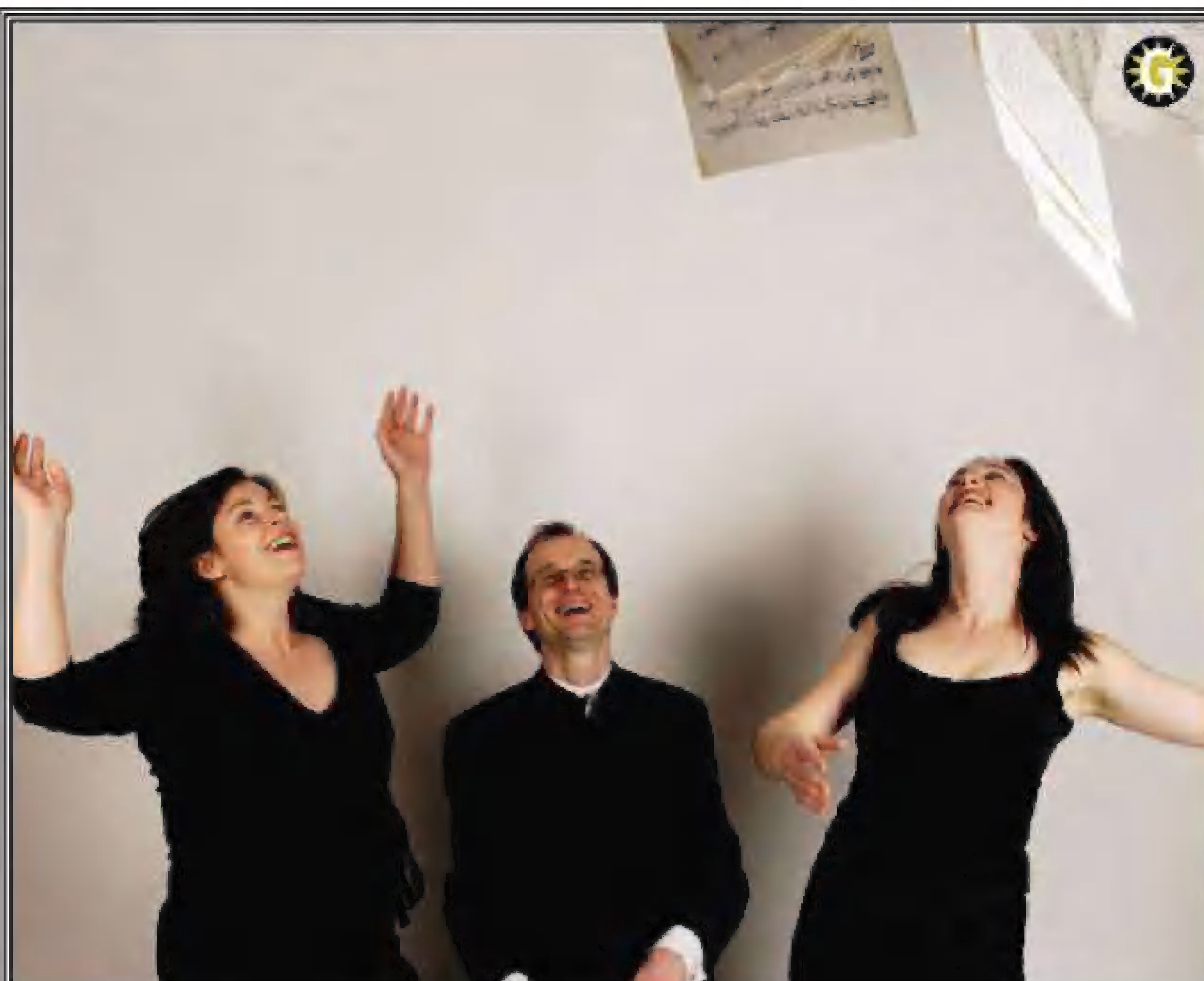
Ray Chen won the prestigious Queen Elisabeth competition in Brussels in 2009. Born in Taiwan, he spent his childhood in Australia before going to the USA

to study with Aaron Rosand at the Curtis Institute. He gives the impression that violin playing comes easily to him, even when the music is technically complex, but he's also a thoughtful player, able to captivate the listener.

Kreisler's arrangement of the *Devil's Trill* Sonata is something of a period-piece – a romanticised take on the story of Tartini's diabolical dream. Chen plays it with an air of complete conviction – the trickiest passages tossed off with nonchalant ease. I don't think his interpretation of the Bach Chaconne has quite settled down. Some sections are finely played but I wish he didn't feel the need to project his sound as though performing before an enormous audience; the music's grandeur emerges without such strenuous effort.

With Wieniawski, Chen is in his element. In the Variations, he makes the virtuoso tricks sound really beautiful; his tone never suffers, however high or fast the passagework. And his cantilena in the *Légende* has a touching, vocal quality, constantly adapting in intensity as the narration unfolds. However, the most impressive part of the recital is surely the Franck. Here is a passionate, uninhibited account, but also a meticulous one; both Chen and Noreen Polera (who emerges from her role as sensitive accompanist to become a worthy partner) find persuasive ways to convey all the composer's suggestions for changes of dynamic, tone and mood.

I'm sure there'll be many opportunities to hear more of Ray Chen, but this is a good place to start. **Duncan Druce**



Two elegiac piano trios are well handled

Russian PASSION

Rachmaninov • Tchaikovsky

Rachmaninov Trio élégiaque No 1

Tchaikovsky Piano Trio, Op 50

Gould Piano Trio (Lucy Gould *vn* Alice Neary *vc* Benjamin Frith *pf*)

Champs Hill © CHRCDO12 (66' • DDD)

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Kempff Trio (7/03) (BIS) BIS-CD1302

Tchaikovsky – selected comparison:

Trio Talweg (TRIT) TRI331156



A more apposite coupling might have been two Russian "in memoriam" piano trios (Tchaikovsky's written in memory of

Nikolai Rubinstein, and Rachmaninov's D minor prompted by the death of Tchaikovsky). In fact, Rachmaninov's earlier one-movement *Trio élégiaque*, to which no particular death is linked, works very well musically as a preface to the Tchaikovsky. Its generally sombre character gives way to some impassioned passages before subsiding into nothingness

with the same desolate theme with which the work opens. The Gould Trio rise to the challenge magnificently, with a particularly robust contribution from Benjamin Frith, best known for his superb recordings of Mendelssohn and Field.

The more extrovert Tchaikovsky, with all its bombastic and rhetorical episodes, is also very well handled, especially the central variations, purportedly depicting incidents in Rubinstein's life and the times that he and Tchaikovsky spent together, though I wonder if the finale, while certainly *allegro risoluto*, is really played *con fuoco*. The performance by the Trio Talweg, though hard to come by, injects an extra level of adrenalin into proceedings to good effect. It also highlights a drawback of the Gould recording. The Talweg's piano is more integrated with the two string instruments: Frith's sumptuously toned instrument, matching the sonority of Alice Neary's cello more closely than Lucy Gould's sometimes reedy violin, is backwardly placed and set apart from the others. By a narrow margin, the Kempff Trio remains top choice for these same two trios. **Jeremy Nicholas**



Sir John Gielgud brings intense drama to *The Soldier's Tale*

The unbridled brilliance of the Boston Symphony Chamber Players

Verve and VIRTUOSITY

Stravinsky · Berg · Schoenberg

Berg Chamber Concerto – Adagio.

Schoenberg Chamber Symphony No 1 (arr Webern) **Stravinsky** *The Soldier's Tale*^a. Octet. Pastorale. Ragtime. Concertino for Twelve Instruments. Septet

^a**Sir John Gielgud** narr ^a**Tom Courtenay** *spkr*

The Soldier ^a**Ron Moody** *spkr* *The Devil*

Boston Symphony Chamber Players

DG Eloquence © ② 480 3300 (139' • ADD)

Recorded 1972-78



These recordings are more than 30 years old. Acoustically, they show their age, and in other respects might seem dated: present-day recordings of *The Soldier's Tale* are likely to use the “authorised new edition” which gets rid of such anachronisms as the percussion *crescendo* at

the end which Stravinsky never sanctioned. There are nevertheless good reasons for giving these discs a hearing.

The main one is the character and precision of the instrumental playing. Performing rhythmically intricate scores without conductor taxes even the most able musicians but whatever trials and errors there were along the way, these accounts are notable for their sheer exuberance as the players relish the challenges and seize the opportunities. Even if balances are not always ideal, and the recorded sound leaves Joseph Silverstein's violin sounding overly dry in places, these are engaging and accomplished readings. Only in the hell-for-leather early stages of Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony No 1 (played in Webern's arrangement, which reduces the original 15-instrument texture by two thirds) does the playing sound at all effortful: and even there unbridled virtuosity soon takes over. There is also an attractive performance of what was probably

Berg's preliminary version of the *Adagio* from his Chamber Concerto, sounding radically different when scored for just violin, clarinet and piano rather than the eventual violin, piano and 13 winds.

The Soldier's Tale is the most substantial work and some listeners might set it aside unheard on learning that the instrumental music was recorded in Boston more than three years before the speech segments were taped in London. But it's a highly artificial work anyway, and the stand-off between Sir John Gielgud's cultured (but often intensely dramatic) tones in the narration and the seat-of-the-pants Boston interpretation is immensely enjoyable. By giving the narrator a selection of the stage directions as well as the original text in the Flanders-Black translation (sadly not included in the booklet), and by encouraging Ron Moody and Tom Courtenay to stay just the right side of sheer ham, the producers did this tricky piece proud. **Arnold Whittall**

ROUND-UP

Romantic chamber music

David Threasher enjoys some riveting new recordings and rediscovers a great chamber ensemble from the past

At last the Eloquence label, Universal's Australian back-catalogue reissue subsidiary, has begun to be physically distributed in the UK. Among Eloquence's latest batch is a group of discs devoted to the **Vienna Octet**, two of them featuring the work on whose instrumentation the ensemble was modelled: Schubert's Octet. They first recorded the work for Decca in 1948 on 78rpm discs, then remade it in mono in 1954 and in stereo three years later, and it's the two remakes that are presented here. The Octet is among the sunniest of all 19th-century chamber works, unclouded by the palpable threat of mortality that would so colour Schubert's great "late" works of just a few years later. It's fitting to hear it in readings by musicians from a golden age of Viennese instrumental playing: the Octet was co-founded by the Boskovsky brothers, violinist Willi and clarinettist Alfred, and they called upon their colleagues from the front desks of the Vienna State Opera Orchestra (which also convened for concerts as the Vienna Philharmonic), as well as their opposite numbers in the Vienna Symphony Orchestra.

There's little difference between the two performances – hardly surprising, given that they were taped only three years apart and by identical personnel – but even interpretational individualities such as pulling up for the first movement's coda material, then gradually working back up to tempo, are common to both. The playing, whether in 1954 or 1957, is full of those touches that seem unique to Viennese musicians, not least the refulgent tone of all concerned but also the laid-back lilt to the music-making, especially at the merest sniff of a 3/4 time signature. The difference in sound between the remarkably honest mono and slightly raggy stereo might be a deciding factor for some; the couplings might be another; the earlier recording presented with another work by Schubert (the *Trout* Quintet with pianist Walter

Panhofer) and another Octet (Mendelssohn's miraculous teenage masterpiece), the later with a truly lovely performance of Beethoven's Septet – the Schubert Octet's "twin work" – plus his early Quintet, Op 29, and Sextet, Op 81b. At Eloquence's super-budget price, why not choose both sets?

A new recording of Schubert's Octet comes from the **Fibonacci Sequence**, a London-based chamber collective consisting, like the Vienna Octet, of some of the city's leading soloists and orchestral players. Quite apart from the advantage – if it is that – of the clinical hush of digital recording, these players offer a



more driven, dynamic performance than the Viennese, and offer no coupling (since they take all repeats, required in the current climate of completeness but not a fashionable thing to do in 1950s Vienna). This is chamber-playing of the highest order, enriched immeasurably by the violin playing of leader Jack Liebeck.

Schubert exerted a profound influence on Schumann and, in his piano trios, there is much evidence of the younger composer reconciling the example of his idol with the mid-century Romantic aesthetic. The three piano trios are among Schumann's most heinously neglected works, the Third



especially, like the Third Violin Sonata, standing as proof to some of the waning of his creative powers as his grip on sanity slipped away. They are well worth investigating,

however, and a new disc by the **Benvenue Fortepiano Trio** offers the First and Third on period instruments – as far as I know, for the first time.

The First is perhaps the best place to start exploring, the Mendelssohnian sound world of the opening movement giving way to the straightforward triumph of the finale, via a galloping scherzo and an inconsolable slow movement. The Third is more elusive, the arabesques of its first movement and its seemingly sectional or episodic cast as it continues concealing a web of subtle thematic and complex harmonic relationships. Complementing the sweetness of Monica Huggett's c1770 Dutch violin is a Viennese fortepiano of 1841, its rich tone only in one or two places – where Schumann's figuration is at its most finger-twisting – giving way to the characteristic "ring" of older instruments. The performances are perhaps less propulsive than those by the Florestan Trio, the most successful recent (modern-instrument) champions of this repertoire (Hyperion, 3/99, A/00), but these players revel in the range of sonorities Schumann conjures up, such as the breathtaking moment in the development section of the first movement of No 1 when the strings introduce a new theme, played close to the bridge for a glassy, etiolated sound, accompanied by piano chords played in the upper register with the damping pedal depressed. As so often, Schumann himself, via his music, delivers the sternest rebuke to those who would cling to lazy clichés about his creative decay or his lack of aural imagination.

Brahms was Schumann's protégé but his piano quartets fall into the Schubertian mould of heavenly length coupled with a seeming profligacy of melodic invention. The **Milander Quartet**, a Ukrainian/French/Swiss-Hungarian piano quartet, play the two shorter works (40' and 36') with much feeling, although they come up against recordings by the Leopold String Trio with Marc-André Hamelin (Hyperion, 1/07) and the Capuçon brothers with



Jack Liebeck:
leader of the
Fibonacci Sequence

Nicholas Angelich (Virgin, 2/09), both performances which seem more naturally responsive to the subtle inflections of Brahms's unfolding dramatic structures.

Meanwhile, the **London Bridge Ensemble** offer Schumann's sole Piano Quartet in a live performance from the 2009 Wye Valley Chamber Music Festival. If in the *Scherzo* they can't quite match the bewitching lightness of Argerich and friends (in Lugano, 2006 –

EMI, 10/07), that's only because nobody can; otherwise this is a performance that builds to a compelling intensity. Couplings are the Op 88 *Fantasiestücke*, Schumann's first essay in the piano trio medium, and the Heine *Liederkreis* (Ivan Ludlow, baritone): apt that the good burghers of Monmouth get to hear song in a hall that was, after all, conceived by a renowned local singer of the past. ☺

THE RECORDINGS

Schubert Octet (r1954) Vienna Octet
Decca Eloquence Ⓢ ② ⓘ 480 3431 (116' • ADD)

Schubert Octet (r1957) Vienna Octet
Decca Eloquence Ⓢ ② ⓘ 480 2403 (143' • ADD)

Schubert Octet Fibonacci Sequence
Deux-Elles ⓘ DXL1145 (61' • DDD)

Schumann Pf Trios Nos 1 & 3 Benvenue Fp Trio
Avie ⓘ AV2210 (58' • DDD)

Brahms Pf Qts Nos 1 & 3 Milander Qt
Avie ⓘ AV2203 (76' • DDD)

Schumann Pf Qt London Bridge Ens
Sonimage ⓘ SON11001 (68' • DDD)

Instrumental

Murray Perahia's brilliant Brahms • Mozart keyboard sonatas • Ruth Palmer's Hidden Acoustics

JS Bach

Solo Cello Suites, BWV1007-12

Roel Dieltiens *vc*

Et'cetera ® ② KTC1403 (153' • DDD)

Outgoing, daring and very personal performances of Bach's Cello Suites



Roel Dieltiens takes a highly individual view of the Suites. His performances are made even more striking by a vivid recording: the balance

is close enough to catch a good deal of the "fizz" of his gut strings. In one or two places, indeed, the tone seems slightly scratchy, but more often I find this edge to the sound simply adds character.

Dieltiens is an outgoing performer, not afraid to use extravagant rubato; he combines this with fine musical understanding and a firm sense of the underlying rhythm, giving pieces like the first part of the Fifth Suite's Prelude a compelling, untrammelled expressive quality. He's concerned, too, about separating Bach's phrases clearly – an admirable aim but sometimes resulting in excessive gaps and loss of momentum. Even the brilliantly played Gigue of the Fourth suite would, I think, be better without such substantial and frequent pauses for breath. And his usually masterly rubato seems misapplied in the more simple, tuneful pieces. For instance, Jaap ter Linden's more sober account (Harmonia Mundi, 10/97^R) is certainly to be preferred in the Third Suite's Bourrée.

Unlike the unaccompanied violin music, Bach's Cello Suites have no autograph source, so there's no single right way of determining which notes should be detached or played smoothly in the same bow stroke. Dieltiens opts for more detached bowing than most cellists but, as far as I can see, isn't concerned too much about consistency; the result is not always completely convincing but has the merit of liveliness and unpredictability. He even adapts the text on occasion – not only with splendidly spontaneous-sounding ornamentation but also by playing the first strain in the Sixth Suite's Sarabande as a single line, only introducing the chordal accompaniment on the repeat. The Sarabandes are the high-point of the set; firm

rhythm, eloquent phrasing and wide expressive range make for a series of outstanding performances, above all the stark, searing account of the extraordinary Sarabande in the Fifth Suite.

In short, these are daring, very personal interpretations. You may not agree with everything Dieltiens does but you're sure to be enlightened and inspired.

Duncan Druce

JS Bach • F Couperin • Rameau

Bach^a Concertos – BWV596: Sicilienne; BWV973; BWV974; BWV975; BWV979: Andante; BWV981. Italian Concerto, BWV971. Pastorale BWV590 – Aria **F Couperin**^b Livres de clavecin – Les baricades misterieuses; Le tic-toc-choc; La Couperin; Les Calotines; Les ombres errantes; Les tricoteuses; Le carillon de Cithère; Musée de Taverni; Les rozeaux; L'Atalante; Passacaille; La muse Plantine; Les tours de passe-passe; Bruit de guerre; Le dod, ou L'amour au berceau; Sur le mouvement des berceuses; La visionnaire; La logivière; Les Chérubins, ou L'aimable Lazure

Debussy^c Images, Book 1 – Hommage à Rameau

Duphy^b La Pothouin **Rameau**^c Nouvelle suites de Pièces de clavecin – in A; in G

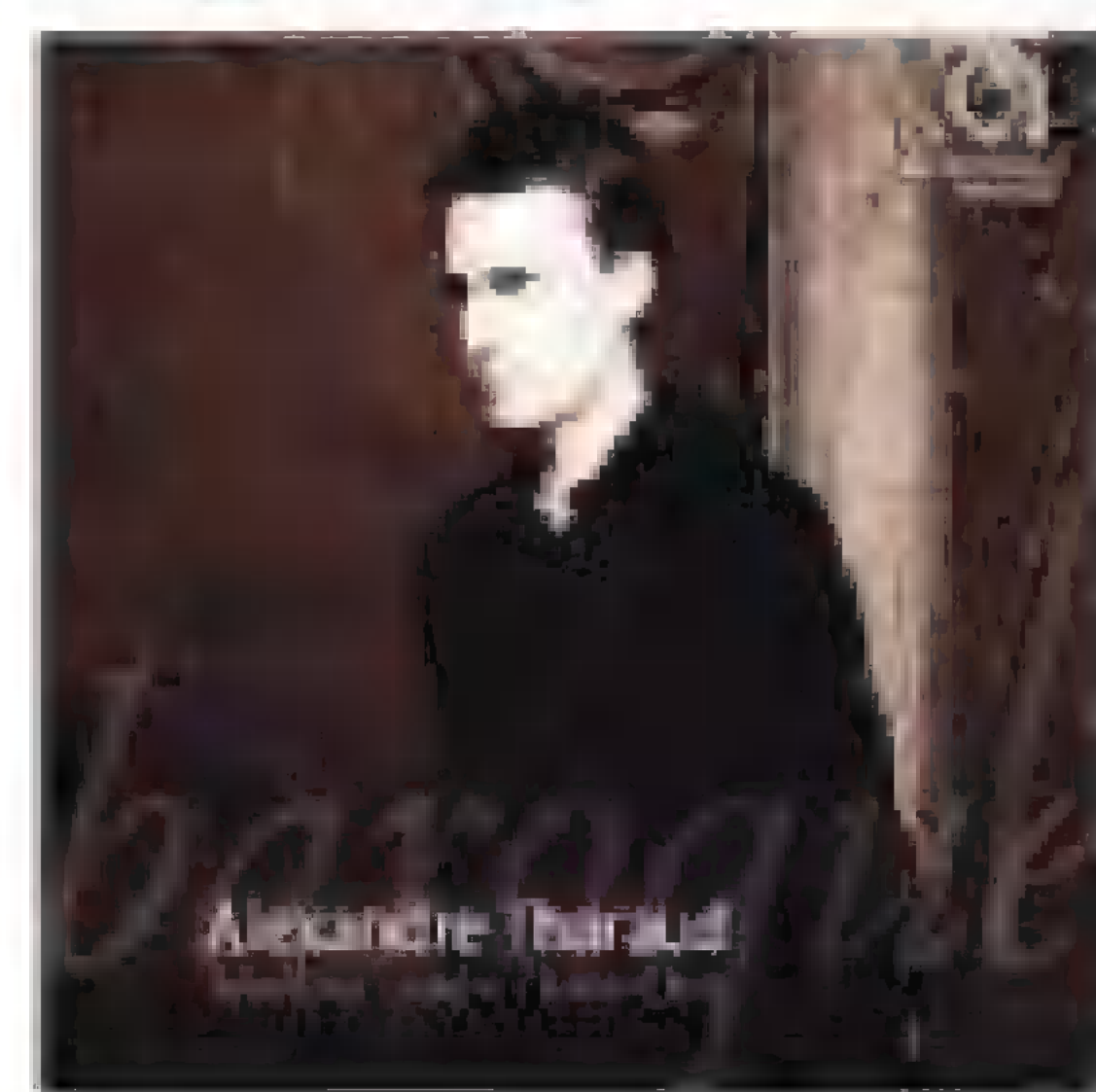
Alexandre Tharaud *pf*

Harmonia Mundi ® ③ HMX290 8379/81 (3h 4' • DDD)

From ^cHMC90 1754 (5/02), ^aHMC90 1871 (9/05),

^bHMC90 1956 (6/07)

Harpsichord repertoire played with originality and flair on the piano



Any pianist who conspicuously aligns himself with the harpsichord repertoire is going to divide opinion, and such has been the case with Alexandre

Tharaud, whose three albums of 18th-century music for Harmonia Mundi are here reissued in one handsomely presented set. His Rameau from 2001 is the earliest, and was received in these pages by Stephen Plaistow with an admiration tempered by doubts that Rameau could ever be a total success on the piano. All I can say to that is that I too considered the instrument a no-go area for Rameau until I heard this recording. Tharaud combines pianistic imagination and stylistic sensitivity to locate the fidgety energy of *La poule*, the rhythmic playfulness of *Les tricoteuses* and the

grandeur and verve of the *Gavotte et doubles*, and his playing has clarity and brilliance. To my mind no other pianist has reproduced the spirit of this composer more enchantingly.

The same strengths illuminate the most recent of these recordings, a 2007 disc of Couperin. Tharaud selects from across the composer's output and for the most part finds pieces to which his sympathetic but unashamedly pianistic reinventions can contribute something new and appropriate, allowing the likes of the wondrous *Les baricades mystérieuses*, mechanistic *Le tic-toc-choc*, glistening *La carillon de Cithère* and searchingly plangent *Les ombres errantes* to emerge with depth of character intact.

The disc of Bach solo concertos from 2005 is a slightly different case. Although these are real keyboard pieces from Bach's hand, they are at the same time transcriptions of orchestral concertos by Italian composers such as Vivaldi and Marcello, making the harpsichord-versus-piano question a less pressing one. Tharaud seems liberated by this in a way that he is not by Couperin and Rameau, relishing the opportunity to dig for the deeper sonorities required to imitate a string orchestra and building excitement in the finales with strong rhythmic and dynamic definition. In short, this is an original-thinking pianist with a true flair for the Baroque, and we should hope for more harpsichord music from him: how about Froberger, Byrd or Scarlatti? **Lindsay Kemp**

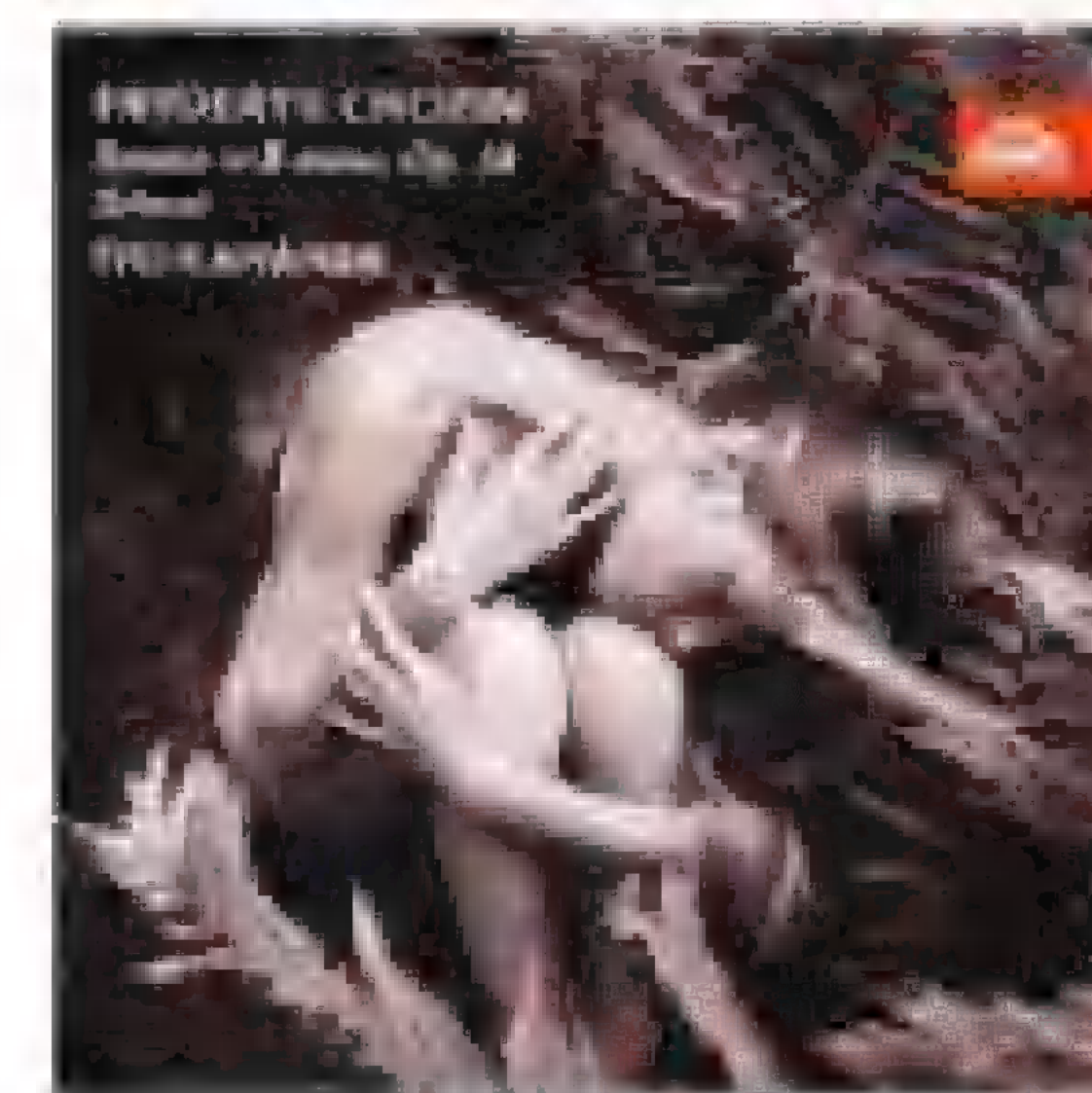
Chopin

Piano Sonata No 3, Op 58. Four Scherzos

Ivo Kahánek *pf*

Supraphon © SU4030-2 (63' • DDD)

A young Czech pianist maintains a misplaced restraint in Chopin



Ivo Kahánek dedicates his recital to his professor, Ivan Klášný, and in an intriguing accompanying interview he claims that he has been familiar with

Chopin's music since childhood. And certainly all his performances have a natural grace and impetus. Nothing is over-stretched, exaggerated or rhetorical. Yet at the same time a certain diffidence hangs like a mist across the first three of the Scherzos, their irony and violence tempered by a misplaced

restraint. Everything slips by too easily, almost as if he took Chopin's audacity for granted. This is particularly true of the Third Scherzo, which is insufficiently dramatic and intense (though he flashes fire in the ferocious coda). He is hauntingly reflective in the Fourth Scherzo's central *più lento* but overall there is insufficient engagement with Chopin's seething cauldron of ideas.

Much the same could be said of the Third Sonata. Kahánek is brisk and indifferent to the composer's *maestoso* qualification in the first movement and there is too little sense of mounting excitement in the equestrian finale. More academically, I am grateful for the absence of the first-movement repeat – which still seems to me more than debatable – but I would question his way with the central section of the Second Scherzo, which is marked *sostenuto* and *sotto voce*, not *molto meno mosso*. Well recorded, these performances are in danger of sounding coolly appraising rather than lost in wonder at such musical glory.

Bryce Morrison

Chopin

Four Ballades. Four Scherzos. Fantaisie, Op 49. Barcarolle, Op 60. Piano Sonatas – No 1, Op 4; No 2, Op 35; No 3, Op 58

Adam Harasiewicz *pf*

Newton Classics © 8802015 (158' • ADD)

Recorded 1958–67. From Fontana originals

A thrilling pianist whose celebrity wasn't as great as it should have been



In 1955 Adam Harasiewicz won first prize in the Warsaw International Chopin Competition. Ashkenazy came second. The decision puzzled those

who saw Harasiewicz as a cool, temperate, monochrome pianist who kept emotion at arm's length. And so this two-disc reissue of recordings dating from the late 1950s and 1960s revives interest in a pianist whose career languished while Ashkenazy's advanced to international stardom. Certainly these performances are not for those who warm to Chopin plastered with self-serving idiosyncrasy, for here is an entirely serious Chopin, musicianly, formidably commanding, without frills or distractions. True, there are occasional suggestions of a pianist more inclined to prose than poetry (the opening of the Second Ballade and the absence of any sense of dialogue or question-and-answer at the start of the Fantaisie). And clearly those looking for an iridescent range of colour, nuance and whispered confidences will look elsewhere.

Yet beneath the poised and aristocratic surface you sense the truest poetic and musical commitment. The First Sonata, where Chopin dourly doffs his hat to academe, could hardly be played in grander



A belated return to Brahms has been well worth the wait

Illuminating BRAHMS

Brahms

Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel, Op 24. Two Rhapsodies, Op 79. Six Piano Pieces, Op 118. Four Piano Pieces, Op 119

Murray Perahia *pf*

Sony Classical © 88697 72725-2 (79' • DDD)



It may be 20 years since Murray Perahia's last Brahms release but the wait has been gloriously worthwhile. For here,

once more, is a pianist who achieves the highest musical quality with the most economical means. Time and again Brahms's potential for strenuousness and opacity is clarified with a superfine musical intelligence and technique. The opening Aria from the *Handel* Variations is unusually thoughtful and considered, and in the *sciolto* of Var 14 he conveys all of Brahms's riotous brilliance while characteristically remaining in superb control. Hear his hushed withdrawal at the start of Var 22, as if the music's magical chime was heard from a great distance; and, *per contra*, I doubt whether the concluding and exultant fugue has often been given with a more formidably yet lightly worn articulacy in its entire history. This is a performance for those poor souls

who, amazingly, take a dim view of Brahms's keyboard variations.

Translucent voicing and texture characterise Perahia's way with the Op 79 Rhapsodies and most of all the Opp 118 and 119 Intermezzos. Perahia achieves a burning clarity (even when the music is marked *piano* and *sotto voce*) at the start of Op 118's concluding Intermezzo, bringing a wealth of concentrated detail and an impeccable line and impetus to this heart-stopping epic in miniature (if the paradox be allowed), a mirror of the inner desolation that afflicted Brahms both early and late in his life. Try Op 119 No 1 for a poetic intensity and subtlety uniquely Perahia's and you may well wonder when you last heard a pianist with a more patrician disregard for all forms of bloated excess or exaggeration.

There are, of course, other approaches to these works – Katchen's stunning opulence and theatricality in the *Handel* Variations (Decca, 2/91), Lupu's crepuscular magic in the late Intermezzos (Decca, 8/87) or Argerich's early and inflammatory genius in the Rhapsodies (DG, 2/93, 6/95) – yet I doubt whether a pianist more finely attuned to every harmonic and rhythmic subtlety has existed since Lipatti. This disc, finely recorded, forms a vital part of Perahia's crowning return after several years of debilitating illness. Bryce Morrison

style, with a *Larghetto* (a flash of inspiration in striking 5/4 time) given with a rapt sense of its quality. Harasiewicz's mastery of the more demanding pages of the Ballades will arouse the envy of even the most superbly equipped pianists. And if the Fourth Scherzo is more chilly than affectionate, it is difficult to imagine a more dazzling performance. The transfers are excellent and hopefully there will be more issues – not just in Chopin – by this magisterial and unduly neglected pianist.

Bryce Morrison

Mozart

Complete Piano Sonatas

Daniel-Ben Pienaar *pf*

Avie ® ⑤ AV2209 (4h 48' • DDD)

Old and new styles of playing applied to the complete sonatas of Mozart



Daniel-Ben Pienaar couldn't have begun better, not by playing but by saying, "It is inescapable that a performance practice for these works that engages

the instrument's full expressive potential needs to look beyond easy categories of 'authentic', or 'modern' or 'historically informed'. Quite – but that's not all, so do read his booklet-note first.

One factor strikes immediately: there is not a whiff of bygone reverential, even obsequious attitudes to Mozart that still cast faint shadows among some pianists. Pienaar is therefore "modern" in his discernment of the music. But – how about this for a 19th-century throwback? – Pienaar de-synchronises his hands, though selectively so.

Effects are clear in, for example, the Fantasia, K475. The fractional hiatus between left and right underpins the harmony in the first and third bars; and a similar hiatus in the D major section (2'25") lends added expression to its contrasting calmness. The staggered articulation is no mere anachronism. It becomes a subtle aspect of a range of expression Pienaar uses to penetrate music "very rich in activity, rich in personality and topoi". Point and purpose explained. And totally disdained is "the facile stereotype of Mozart as the epitome of elegance".

Of the utmost importance in conveying convictions is Pienaar's strong, independent left hand. It tightens harmonic tension and supports rather than accompanies treble lines. Be it high drama or lyrical contemplation, Pienaar scans phrases with a fluidity that releases the music from rhythmic inertia. Ignore the odd insignificant pianistic smudge, because keyboard prowess is formidable. But as his performance of the *Alla turca* Sonata, K331,

shows, technique isn't allowed to edge ahead of emotional and intellectual depth. A much-mistreated piece emerges in a different light. Pienaar pays attention to the oft-forgotten *grazioso* element in the first movement, eschews metrical stiffness in the Minuet, yields to the Trio's distinctive flow and refuses to turn the March into a janissary bash. Extend such thoughtful, profound probity to the whole set and you have interpretations where within the letter critically observed, a numinous potency breaks free. Momentous Mozart.

Nalen Anthoni



Mozart

Piano Sonatas – No 10, K330; No 14, K457. Adagio, K540. Rondos – K485; K511

Kristian Bezuidenhout *fp*

Harmonia Mundi ⑤ HMU90 7498 (71' • DDD)

Mozart's blackest minor-key moods explored on a period keyboard



Mozart's medical history convinced Dr Peter J Davies that he had "a chronic mood disturbance which was associated with

pathological mood-swings of hypomania and depression". That is, Mozart was bipolar. For HC Robbins Landon, he produced his "most troubled, alarming and even dangerous music" during black moods, "baleful pieces" in minor keys, three of which are on this disc.

Troubled they certainly are; and Kristian Bezuidenhout does try to fathom the inner recesses of a disquieted mind. The fast transients of his fortepiano (a Paul McNulty copy of an Anton Walter, c1802) lay bare a "moodscape" of A minor bleakness in the opening statement of the Rondo, K511. The moments of light from major keys (the A major section also warmed up by the lever-controlled moderator) are just that. Starkness predominates, as it also does in the Adagio, K540. But here Bezuidenhout, perhaps surmising impending tragedy too, introduces a hushed poignancy to the last page of the piece.

Introversion runs deep. Not so in the Sonata, K457. Unrest flares up as Bezuidenhout unleashes a varied set of emotions even in the *Adagio*, where agitated undercurrents keep bubbling up to disturb an apparently serene surface. His performances of these three works are of great import. Ditto his interpretation of the slow movement of K330. He seems least interested in the least inspired work, the Rondo, K485. No matter. This is Mozart rethought, unsanitised and maybe unsettling for some. But as Bezuidenhout implies, we have to move on. Nalen Anthoni

Pierné

Etude de concert. Trois pièces, Op 29.

Passacaille. Variations, Op 42

Laurent Wagschal *pf*

Timpani ⑤ 1C1178 (62' • DDD)

A strangely neglected composer whose piano music is well championed here



In his accompanying essay Laurent Wagschal laments the absence of much great French music from the average concert pianist's repertoire, his eyes and ears firmly fixed

on Fauré and Pierné. Indeed, it is remarkable that Pierné's powerful and magnificent body of piano music is not more widely played. The sombre and superb Variations (reflecting in 1918 the threat of the German army) were greatly admired by Cortot and set by Fauré as a compulsory piece for the chief piano competition at the Paris Conservatoire. Yet at another level such neglect is understandable. The musical and technical demands are both unusual and immense, and the mood – much inspired by Pierné's teacher César Franck – is formidably austere with only an occasional break into the light.

Hugely ambitious it is, like some cloudy mountain peak, though its difficulties hold no terror for Laurent Wagschal, clearly a superb pianist of great power and eloquence. He is no less successful in the delectable finger-teasing *Etude de Concert* with its burgeoning melody and scintillating caprice. The fugue from the *Trois pièces* is piquantly and rigorously worked, the central "Nocturne en forme de valse" an intriguing mix of salon and impressionist ideas, while the final "Etude symphonique" brings the opus to a blazing conclusion. Timpani's sound faithfully captures Wagschal's exceptional dynamic range and no praise could be high enough for this reminder of neglected genius.

Bryce Morrison

Shostakovich

Preludes and Fugues, Op 87

Roger Woodward *pf*

Celestial Harmonies ® ② 14302-2 (126' • AAD)

Recorded 1975. From RCA ⑤ LRL2 5100 (12/75)

The first Western recording of the complete Preludes and Fugues



Put on the first or the last of the 24 Preludes and Fugues and you would surely want to consign the set to Curiosity Corner – at best. Roger Woodward

plays the C major Prelude so straight that it sounds simply unmusical, and takes the Fugue at more or less double the composer's tempo. Similarly, he delivers the D minor Prelude as

though he has no patience with its rhetoric, and while the fugue starts promisingly enough, the later stages are simply not ready technically for the recording studio.

On the other hand, if you started at the beginning of the second disc with the F sharp major Prelude and Fugue you would find the limpid tone and subtly yielding phrasing that only the most refined and sympathetic of pianists can deliver. And if you continued through the profundity of the F flat minor, the sauciness of the D flat major and – most astonishingly of all – the fluttering improvisatory quality Woodward brings to the B flat minor Fugue (never mind that it is a far cry from Shostakovich's *Adagio* marking and that part of the fugue subject is misread as a trill), you might hesitate to be dismissive.

Appearing in the mid-1970s, this was the first complete recording made in the West. I myself bought it then but soon disposed of it, alienated by so many bizarre tempi and so much over-peddalling, as well as by the dry acoustic and the glassy quality of the Bösendorfer instrument. Coming back to it now, I found myself more responsive to Woodward's interpretative whims, though in his booklet essay he has a colossal nerve invoking the authority of the composer's own recordings as against the "more traditional romantic conception" of Nikolaieva, when his own recording is so obviously flawed. Maybe there is no point trying to sum up the set as a whole, so far-flung are its extremes. If pushed, I would say much of it feels like inspired sight-reading: at times almost embarrassing and not to be repeated but at others bordering on the revelatory. **David Fanning**

Alfred Cortot

H

'The Late Recordings, Vol 4'

Chopin Nocturne No 5, Op 15 No 2. Etudes, Op 10 – No 5; Op 25, Nos 2 & 9. Piano Sonatas – No 2, Op 35 – Marche funèbre; No 3, Op 58 – Largo. Tarantelle, Op 43. Waltz No 7, Op 64 No 2 **Liszt** Hungarian Rhapsody, S244 No 11 **Schubert** Moment musical, D780 No 3. 12 Deutsche Ländler, D790. Litanie, D343 (arr Cortot) **Schumann** Carnaval, Op 9

Alfred Cortot *pf*

APR mono © APR5574 (73' • ADD)

Recorded 1951-54

The mesmerising musicianship of Alfred Cortot - mishaps and all



Volume 4 of APR's "Alfred Cortot: The Late Recordings" is the last of an inimitable series. At 76, Cortot's light shone as brilliantly as ever, making his legendary mishaps (hilarious in the Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsody*) scarcely a marginal issue. Everything is blessed with a life-affirming charm, wit and vitality, Cortot's burning

romantic conviction complemented by endless touches of wit and illumination.

Schubert's F minor *Moment musical* could hardly be more perky, the selection of Ländler (diamond chippings from the master's workshop) more affectionate, while in Cortot's fifth and final recording of his own arrangement of "Litanie" you hear all of that legendary *cantabile*, the vocal line surging and singing in bold relief against its background. The Liszt Rhapsody is spiced with emendations wholly in the spirit of the composer and Schumann's *Carnaval* includes a gloriously rowdy Florestan and a "Reconnaissance" that dances on points.

All the Chopin items are alive with a poetry and daredevil aplomb as required, also with a polyphonic magic all but extinct today. Confronted by today's pianists, Cortot would surely have found much to admire while also noting a constriction, a deadening form of "correctness" and a fear of emotion, of stepping outside the prescriptive worlds of the exam room and the competition circuit. Bryan Crimp has done Cortot proud, prompting one to wonder whether there was ever a pianist of greater human richness and coruscating vitality. **Bryce Morrison**

'Bach and the North German Tradition, Vol 1'

JS Bach Christ ist erstanden, BWV627. Prelude and Fugue BWV532. Herr Jesus Christ, dich zu uns wend, BWV655 **G Böhm** Chorale Partitas – Ach wie nichtig, ach wie flüchtig; Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele. Capriccio **Buxtehude** Passacaglia, BuxWV161. Prelude, BuxWV140. Toccata, BuxWV164

Martin Neu *org*

Audite © AUDITE92 547 (72' • DDD/DSD)

Played on the Ahrend Organ at the Church of St Otto, Herzogenaurach, Germany

Bach and the music that influenced him, played on a fine Bavarian organ



Although Bach gets top billing (being alphabetically top of the class), the most pleasurable highlights are the three delightful pieces by Georg Böhm (1661-1733), who Bach got to know between 1700 and 1702 when he attended school in Lüneberg. As a musician of wide musical tastes – informed, no doubt, by a spell working in Hamburg's opera house – Böhm is remembered best for establishing the chorale partita as a fully fledged musical form. Two examples are recorded here, mostly on the manuals alone, with sparing use of the pedals. Böhm's encouragement of Bach manifested itself in a love of elegant dance forms (Lüneberg being celebrated for its love of all things in the French taste), flowing bass-lines and a willingness to experiment. Although it is

usually played on the harpsichord, Böhm's Capriccio in D sounds quite at ease on the organ. Bach's early Prelude and Fugue in D is rattled off in a similarly strong, no-nonsense manner. Where Bach excelled, of course, was in the trio sonata. Martin Neu produces a perfectly poised chorale trio on *Herr Jesus Christ*. Buxtehude's contributions emphasise how indebted Bach was in matters fugal. In Buxtehude's Passacaglia the Ahrend organ's tuning strains somewhat under full load as Neu climbs the steep summit to the crowning final *tierce de Picardie*. Although this new Bavarian organ has a modest specification on paper, such is the variety of its timbral beauty that the ear never tires. The documentation, recorded sound and playing are all of the first order.

Malcolm Riley

'Hidden Acoustics'

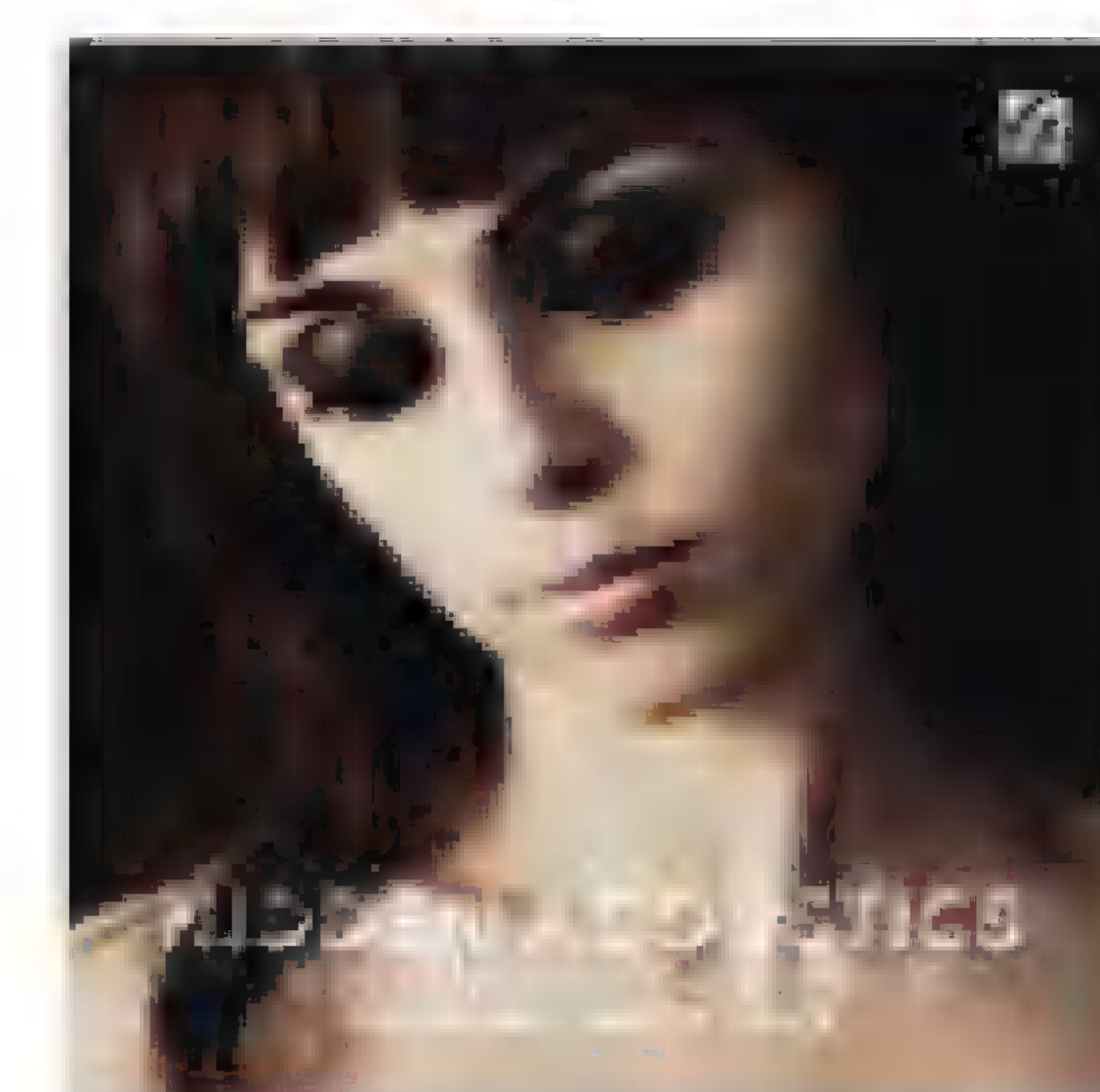
Bach Partita No 2, BWV1004

Bartók Solo Violin Sonata, Sz117

Ruth Palmer *vn*

Nimbus Alliance © NI6133 (60' • DDD)

While Palmer's commitment cannot be doubted, there are interpretative issues



I was immediately impressed by Ruth Palmer's 100 per cent involvement in her music-making. From the passionate start of the *Tempo di ciaccona* at

the beginning of the Bartók, we're strongly drawn into her interpretation, the more so as the recording vividly captures the rich tone of her "Hubay" Strad. Listeners familiar with the Bartók will notice some differences to what is usually played – changed bowings, octaves omitted – for Palmer is using an earlier version of the Sonata, before the composer incorporated changes suggested by Yehudi Menuhin. I don't imagine, however, that the very slow *tranquillo* sections in the finale have Bartókian authorisation and I feel in general that the performance is somewhat one-sided, not presenting a full range of tone colours. Missing are those ultra-quiet and icy sounds which make such a memorable impact on Christian Tetzlaff's recording (Virgin, 9/04).

Palmer's Bach is similarly rich-toned and intensely felt. It's a shame she chooses to leave out repeats in the Allemanda, Corrente and Giga and I wish she had done more to maintain the fine tempo she sets at the start of the Ciaccona. There is, however, some very beautiful playing as the movement unfolds, notably in her meditative account of the long *arpeggiando* passage, but the whole rather lacks momentum and a clear sense of direction. There's a similar tendency to spread and hold back in the Allemanda and the Giga. But, throughout both works, we're aware of listening to distinctive, persuasive violin playing. **Duncan Druce**

Vocal

Two facets of the German Requiem • Beautiful Bizet you may not know • Bernstein boxes

JS Bach

'Cantatas, Vol 47'

Cantatas – No 36, *Schwingt freudig euch empor*; No 47, *Wer sich selbst erhöhet, der soll erniedriget werden*; No 27, *Wer weiss, wie nahe mir mein Ende* (with alternative version of alto aria 'Willkommen! will ich sagen')

Hana Blažíková *sop* Robin Blaze *countertenor*

Satoshi Mizukoshi *ten* Peter Kooij *bass*

Bach Collegium Japan / Masaaki Suzuki

BIS © BIS-SACD1861 (64' • DDD/DSD • T/U)

Another inconsistent volume, although the best is still compelling



Late works from Trinity 1726 and a revered and substantial Advent cantata constitute this variable volume of readings from Masaaki Suzuki. The

success of the previous disc is partly carried forward here in a radiantly luminous performance of BWV27, a meditation on death whose unusual juxtaposition of Passion-like austerity and questing recitatives in the opening chorus deserves every ounce of the expressive concentration afforded it by Bach Collegium Japan.

This sentiment of "willkommen" to death might appear startlingly removed from the equivalent in the extensive Advent work, *Schwingt freudig* (BWV36), where the welcoming is about new life; but, in BWV27, such is the ringing paradise of the fragrant oboe d'amore and obbligato harpsichord (whose version for organ also appears as an appendix) that Robin Blaze's sprightly and generous singing leaves us relishing the prospect of our passing, as much as embracing "the valuable treasure" of Christ's imminent arrival.

Regarding the other soloists, Peter Kooij is not at his best and in BWV36 – a work which Bach rated highly, as evinced in various transformations over the course of at least 10 years – one is sent running back to John Eliot Gardiner's early reading (Archiv, 2/93). Not least, one is reminded here of the nuanced characterisation of Anthony Rolfe-Johnson in contrast to Satoshi Mizukoshi's limited tonal reach.

If Kooij again lacks focus in the intricate courtly essay "Jesu, beuge doch" from BWV47, we are treated in this great work to

more of Hana Blažíková, a Bach soprano of engaging disposition. Of course, the huge canvas of this chorus never fails to impress. It's as if Bach took the twin ideas of exaltation and humiliation with no other goal than to spin them into an arresting, un-tempered and inventive *dispositio*. Suzuki celebrates this quasi-symphonic structure with a performance of genuine stature. To confirm the prevailing inconsistency of this volume, the chorus of BWV36 is humdrum and sketchy. So, in sum, a pick-and-mix volume compared to the recent best.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Bouteiller • Brossard

Bouteiller Requiem^a Brossard Stabat mater.

^aInterspersed with M-A Charpentier Méditation

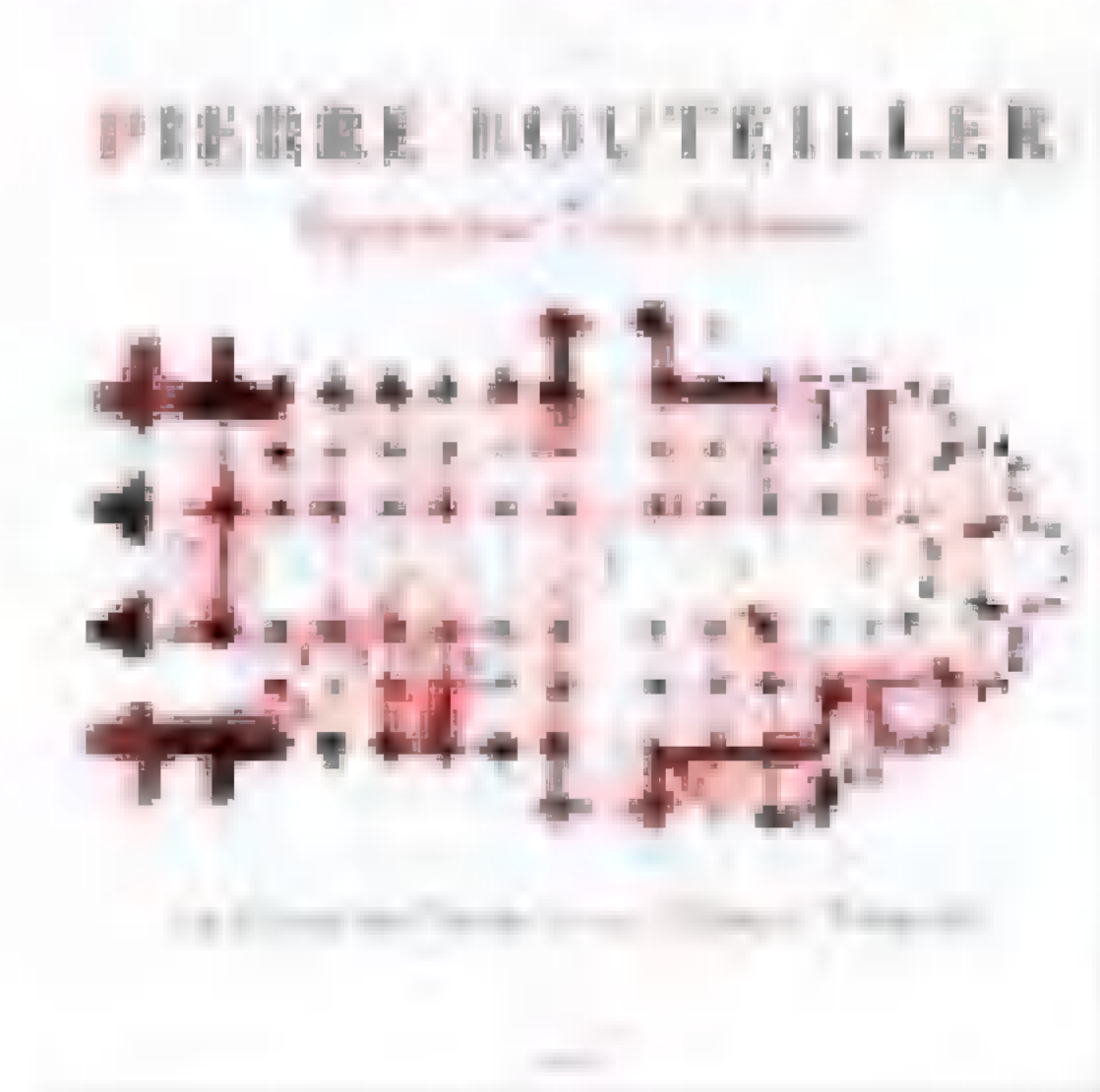
Frémart Prélude. Méditation Hugard Elévation

Le Prince Méditation

Le Concert Spirituel / Hervé Niquet

Glossa © GCD921621 (62' • DDD)

Sacred works from the turn of the 17th century, bound by convention



The Requiem of Pierre Bouteiller, I'm sorry to say, put me in mind of Bernard Shaw's comment about Brahms's *German Requiem*, that it "is

patiently borne only by the corpse".

Composed in 1693, during Bouteiller's first stint as *maître de chapelle* at Troyes, it's scored for a mixed choir of five voices and continuo. Taking a lead from the preface to a volume published around the time Bouteiller was born, Hervé Niquet has adapted the work for men's voices, with four *hautes-contres* on the top line and two singers for each of the lower parts. He has also added single strings, which double the vocal lines.

That the writing is sombre is only to be expected, but Bouteiller's Requiem is plain dull, passages of boring counterpoint varied by passages of equally boring homophony. What lends the performance some interest is Niquet's reconstruction of a 17th-century service. The movements of the Requiem are interspersed with short pieces by Henri Frémart, Charpentier, Pierre Hugard and Louis Le Prince: all originally for voices, but played here very beautifully by the string group.

You have to look closely at the back of the cardboard container to see that there's a

second work on the disc. Sébastien de Brossard, compiler of the first French dictionary of music, was a canon of Meaux: where the mustard comes from, but also where the famous preacher Bossuet – to whom the Comte des Grieux ironically compares his son in Massenet's *Manon* – was his bishop. Brossard's *Stabat mater*, as conventional as Bouteiller's Requiem, is redeemed by a vigorous final section, "Quando corpus morietur". Good performances, but why did they bother?

Richard Lawrence

Brahms

Ein deutsches Requiem, Op 45

Genia Kühmeier *sop* Thomas Hampson *bar*

Arnold Schoenberg Choir; Vienna Philharmonic

Orchestra / Nikolaus Harnoncourt

RCA Red Seal © 88697 72066-2 (72' • DDD • T/U)

Brahms

Ein deutsches Requiem, Op 45

Camilla Tilling *sop* Detlef Roth *bar*

Berlin Radio Choir; Berlin Radio Symphony

Orchestra / Marek Janowski

Pentatone © PTC5186 361 (69' • DDD/DSD • T/U)

Selected comparisons:

Karajan (1/65⁸) (DG) 463 661-2 GOR

Gardiner (4/91⁸) (PHIL) 478 2119 DOR

Norrington (4/93) (VIRG) 561605-2

Two new German Requiems seek out different facets of the work



Nikolaus Harnoncourt's expertly engineered Vienna Philharmonic recording of *Ein deutsches Requiem* has been sitting in the vaults for some three years but its late release reveals no obvious reason for the delay: the performance is both beautifully shaped (especially from the woodwinds) and devotional in spirit. The

closing "Selig sind die Toten" presents a warming richness of texture, the underlying rhythmic pulse admirably clear, while the sombre processional of "Denn alles Fleisch" builds well, the contrasting "So seid nun geduldig" ("Be patient, therefore") lightened with the subtlest touch. Thomas Hampson sounds a mite frail in his first solo, though

given that knowing one's frailty is the subject of the text, the effect may well be intentional. For my taste, Genia Kühmeier is just a little too operatic in her approach to "Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit"; the idea of renewed joy needs something a little more serene. Both Lynn Dawson for Sir Roger Norrington and Charlotte Margiono for Sir John Eliot Gardiner fit the bill more comfortably (not to mention Gundula Janowitz on Karajan's first DG recording), and Norrington's Olaf Bär is especially convincing in the baritone solos.

But there's a richly recorded second newcomer ("newer-comer", actually – it dates from 2009) that begs consideration, where Marek Janowski conducts the forces of Berlin Radio with Camilla Tilling and Detlef Roth. Here the choral singing is especially good, while Janowski's conducting really makes you sit up. The principal draw of his performance is its drama, especially the second climax of "Denn alles Fleisch", which is so much more powerful than the first and significantly more powerful than anyone else's in this particular batch. Norrington gives the fastest performance of the four, keeping as he does more or less to Reinthaler's (later abandoned) metronome markings, and as ever with him, the effect is keenly spontaneous. Gardiner is in the same ballpark, roughly speaking, though his performance wears a warmer countenance. But for me both the newcomers stack up well against the existing competition, Janowski scoring highest for immediate impact, Harmoncourt for imagination and for weaving his way beneath and between the notes. Both in their different ways capture the unique spirit of this wonderful work.

Rob Cowan

P Carr

Requiem for an Angel. I thank you God for this Most Amazing Day. Holding the Stars. Now Comes Beauty

Sophie Bevan *sop* Mark Stone *bar* Chorus Angelorum; Bath Philharmonia / Gavin Carr Stone Records © 5060192 780048 (72' • DDD)

Attractive music but not without depth, and sure to appeal widely



Following an international career in opera stage management, Paul Carr (b1961) has, since 2004, made a living as a composer and as an abstract artist. Best known for his film scores (*Lady Audley's Secret*, *Being Considered* and Granada TV's *Girls in Love*), he has also penned a wind quintet, *Diverting Sundays*, and, more recently, an oboe concerto for Nicholas Daniel. His eight-movement Requiem, commissioned by the Athenaeum Singers of Warminster, is dedicated to the



Beautifully sculpted performances by Raphael Pichon

Emotional AMBITION

JS Bach

Cantata No 118, 'O Jesu Christ, mein's Lebens Licht'. Masses – BWV233; BWV236
Eugénie Warnier *sop* Terry Wey *alto*
Emiliano Gonzalez-Toro *ten* Christian Immler *bass* Pygmalion / Raphael Pichon
Alpha © ALPHA170 (61' • DDD)



These beautifully sculpted performances present a perspective on Bach which is committed to beauty of sound – as Pygmalion projected so successfully in their first volume of Masses (12/08) – but allied to a structural coherence which combines elegance and grip. That the composer took such trouble to create these four "Lutheran Masses" (largely reworked from extant cantata movements) justifies the care which Raphael Pichon and his Gallic forces take in advocating these still under-appreciated works.

Bach collectors will remember the *joie de vivre* of the F major Mass in Philippe Herreweghe's memorable 1990 recordings (Virgin, 9/91). Pygmalion bring yet another dimension in linear and textural interest, not to mention a fresh spark. The dynamics duck and dive (with suitably clucking horns in the outer movements) in the irresistible *Gloria* – a movement for

which no surviving cantata source exists – and the balance between choral and instrumental sources is near ideal. The solos seem to emerge effortlessly from the ensemble with, perhaps, a little less comfort from obbligato quarters than the singers themselves.

The languorous opening of the G major Mass is given a kind of *prima prattica* severity which unfolds with supreme dignity, largely through shape derived from the searching bass-lines – a Bachian attribute too often overlooked in the name of democratic homogeneity. There's nothing gratuitously suave about this approach: the fine concerted episode near the beginning of the "Christe eleison" sets out purposefully before the emergence of something altogether more breathtaking as we travel through the movement in a flurry of contrapuntal adventure.

The "Gratias" is the pick of the crop for the remaining movements, thanks to the cultivated and alert bass singing of Christian Immler, but this outstandingly engaging, visceral and characterful disc keeps some of the best till last: a rich but deeply sorrowful reading of the funeral motet, *O Jesu Christ, mein's Lebens Licht*. As for the Masses, occasional lapses in polish are blown away by an emotional ambition which is truly to be cherished.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

memory of Carr's mother, the Australian soprano Una Hale, who died in 2005.

Initial impressions of an unknown work can be misleading. One might think that Carr's work is merely an amalgam of the Fauré and Rutter Requiems (especially the latter), with its sweet, smooth, homophonic hues, caressingly gentle undulations topped off with a rippling harp and an avoidance of the more terrifying aspects of the Latin Requiem – very Classic FM. However, the work does take a hold, especially the spellbinding setting of Arthur Symons's "Let mine eyes see thee", definitely the piece's "hit single". The pace hots up with the appearance of bongos (or are they congas?) in the *Sanctus*. This is a lyrical, reflective, compassionate and, ultimately, uplifting work.

The three shorter choral pieces which complete the disc are hewn from similar rock. The unaccompanied *Now Comes Beauty* stands out strongly. Soloists Sophie Bevan and Mark Stone sing magnificently, soaring above and through the finely blended Chorus Angelorum. Gavin Carr (brother of the composer) directs the Bath Philharmonia with a firm but persuasive touch. Well worth exploring.

Malcolm Riley

Chopin

17 Songs, Op 74. Czary (Enchantment). Dumka. Seize-ans^a. Aime-moi^a. L'oiselet^a. Coquette^a (arr Viardot-García from Chopin's Mazurkas)

Olga Pasichnyk sop Natalya Pasichnyk pf
Naxos © 8 572499 (57 • DDD • N)

The Chopin you rarely hear: his songs, presented in an impressive recording



It is a moot point as to whether Chopin ever intended any of his songs should survive his death. In the event, his friend Julian Fontana tracked down

17 manuscripts and, with the family's permission, published them posthumously as Op 74. "Czary", originally intended for the collection but removed by Fontana, and "Dumka", an earlier version of Op 74 No 13, make up the complete cycle.

Though I have a soft spot for the ripe mezzo of Eugenia Zareska and her 1955 recording with Giorgio Favaretto, the best version currently available is by mezzo Urszula Kryger and Charles Spencer (Hyperion, 2/00⁸). This new recording, however, from sisters Olga and Natalya Pasichnyk, is a serious rival. Presented, unlike Kryger, in numerical order, each song is individually characterised by Olga's expressive and agile soprano – she can exchange a soubrette lightness for a rich chest tone at the drop of a hat – relishing the text with greater charm than Kryger but equally sensitive to

the dominant characters of nostalgia, lovelorn youth and folkloric innocence. Natalya, slightly more backwardly placed than Spencer, follows her sister's every twist and turn with remarkable empathy.

Added attractions are four of the 12 songs the great Spanish singer and friend of Chopin, Pauline Viardot-García (1821-1910), adapted from Chopin's Mazurkas. Taken from the first set, published in 1864, they include "Aime-moi" (first recorded in 1907 by Marcella Sembrich to her own accompaniment) and "Coquette" with spectacular added vocal cadences. Hyperion, with four other Viardot adaptations, offers the complete texts and excellent annotation. Naxos, alas, does not – but don't let that deter you from hearing this impressive sororial debut. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Corp

Flower of Cities. Sleep. The Owl and the Pussycat. Songs from 'Cornucopia'. Break, break, break. Give to my eyes, Lord. The Music of Housman. The Bath. Toward the Unknown Region. The Music of Whitman

Mark Stone bar Simon Lepper pf

Stone Records © 5060192 780031 (73' • DDD • T)

The remarkably varied songs of Ronald Corp are characterfully performed



Ronald Corp may be well known as a choral conductor, notably of children's choirs, but from boyhood onwards he has written songs, inspired by his love of poetry. Here, very well sung by baritone Mark Stone accompanied by Simon Lepper, are no fewer than 39 songs – four cycles plus six very varied extra songs.

Flower of Cities, the first of the four cycles, is devoted to London, opening and closing with words from William Dunbar's tribute, the text which Walton used in his seriously neglected cantata *In Honour of the City of London*. Other songs set words by Byron, Wordsworth, Blake and Carey. It is notable that Corp is never afraid of using extremely well-known words for his songs, hoping to add something to well-known lines. The accompaniments are neatly illustrative, as for example the sound of water imitated in the accompaniment to Wordsworth's poem, "Glide gently".

Here, as in all four cycles, the songs are nicely contrasted, and though the conservative idiom suggests music that could have been written in the 1930s, the results are always attractive. The Housman cycle consists of 12 brief settings, each with a clear, sharp idea, while the Whitman cycle has 10 songs, preceded by another Whitman setting, the best known of all, "Toward the Unknown Region". Here Corp recalls that his interest in Whitman was first inspired by

the Vaughan Williams settings of his verse, as in the *Sea Symphony*.

Choice of poems could hardly be more eclectic, with Edward Lear's "The Owl and the Pussycat" (not quite as striking as that of Victor Hely-Hutchinson, being in a steady rhythm), alongside "The Bath", one of Harry Graham's *Ruthless Rhymes for Heartless Homes*. Exceptionally, the easily tuneful "Give to my eyes, Lord", to words written by a fellow clergyman of Corp's, is designed specially for children to sing.

Most striking are the Whitman settings, again strongly contrasted. "As if a phantom caress'd me", with very spare accompaniment, is followed by "Joy Shipmate" to a hornpipe rhythm and finally, rounding off the whole disc, "Then last of all", with the sparest possible accompaniment. All told, a welcome disc to add to that of Corp's more substantial orchestral works (Dutton, 5/10).

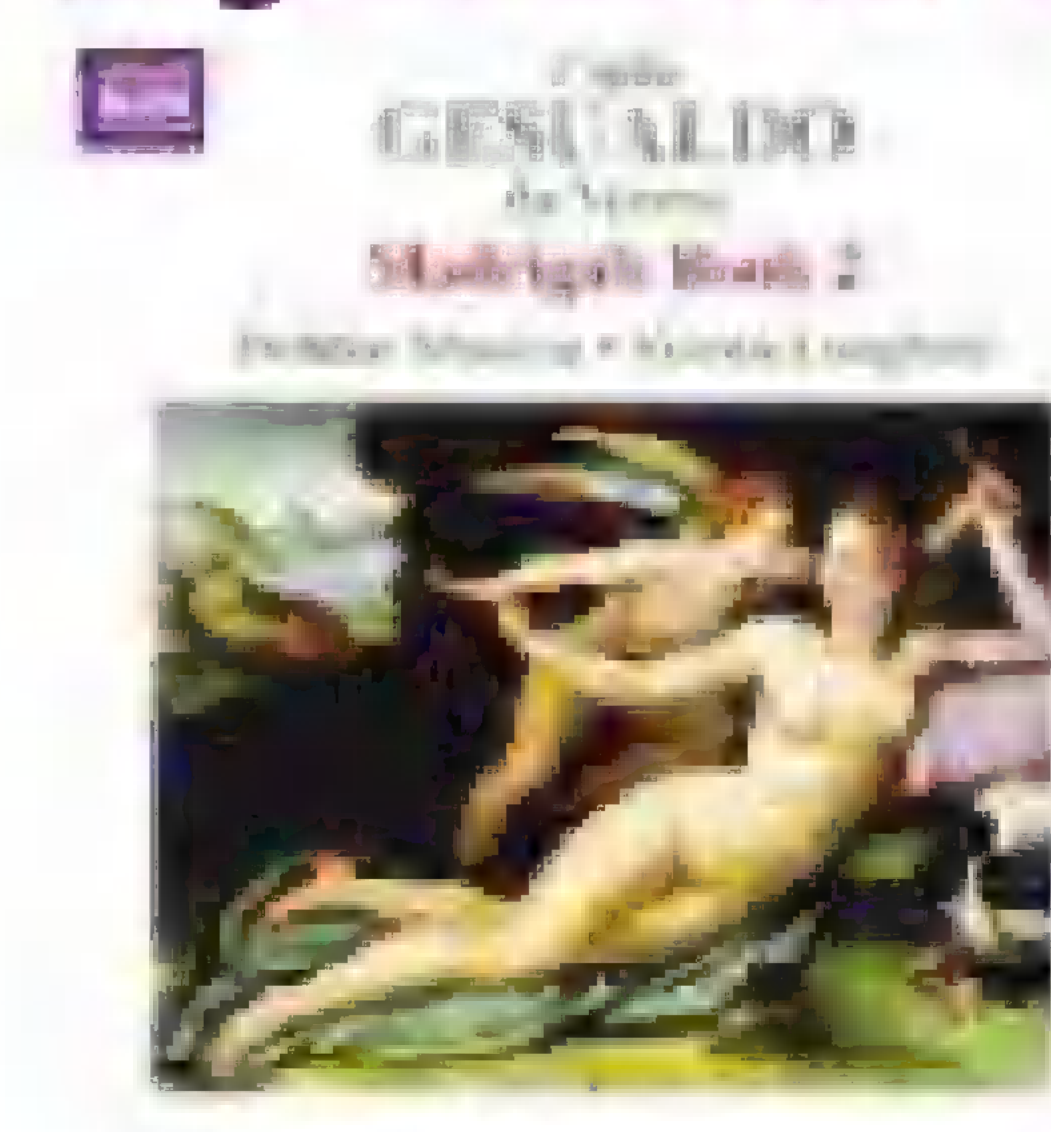
Edward Greenfield

Gesualdo

Madrigals, Book 2

Delitiae Musicae (Alessandro Carmignani, Paolo Costa countertens Fabio Fùrnari, Raffaele Giordani tens Marco Scavazza bar Walter Testolin bass) / Marco Longhini with Carmen Leoni bpd/clav
Naxos © 8 570549 (57 • DDD • T/U)

An early volume of Gesualdo madrigals augurs well for a distinctive set



Like its predecessor, Gesualdo's Second Book of Madrigals bears only hints of what was to follow in the composer's output. For that reason, it hasn't been recorded

as much as the later volumes; and yet there have already been fine readings by two Dutch ensembles, Gesualdo Consort of Amsterdam (CPO, 2/06) and the Kassiopeia Quintet (Globe – as part of a complete set). Delitiae Musicae are also embarked on a complete series, and judging by the first two volumes, it will be as distinctive as their complete Monteverdi madrigal cycle. In reviewing the latter's Sixth Book, I remarked on the challenges to balance and voicing posed by this ensemble's use of countertenors on the top line or lines. My concerns there still seem warranted, particularly in view of the occasionally strained timbre of the top voice (try the second piece, "Ma se tale ha costei"); however, I've found myself warming to the overall approach, which is relaxed and unhurried. This, combined with the ensemble's sound, securely underpinned by Walter Testolin's bass, allows points of detail to tell (for example, final or sectional cadences) that might otherwise be skated over.

In some madrigals the voices are joined by a harpsichordist, who improvises links between sections in the etiolated manner



Delightful discovery

Jean-Claude Casadesus's Bizet revivals

Bizet

Clovis et Clotilde^a. *Te Deum*^b

^aKatarina Jovanovic *sop* ^bPhilippe Do *ten*

^aMark Schnaible *bass* ^bNord-Pas-de-Calais Choir; Lille National Orchestra /

Jean-Claude Casadesus

Naxos © 8 572270 (53' • DDD • N)



This is a disc guaranteed to delight anyone who has ever responded to the youthful sparkle of Bizet's Symphony in C.

Like the Symphony, the dramatic cantata *Clovis et Clotilde* and the ambitious *Te Deum* date from the composer's teenage years. The cantata was Bizet's entry to the Prix de Rome in 1857, which he won, while the *Te Deum* was written during the same period for the same judges. Both works have remained in oblivion – quite undeservedly, as these outstanding performances bear witness. Passages in the cantata reflect the music of his teacher, Gounod, but more often Bizet's own distinctive style is reflected in the abundant lyricism. Plainly, even in his teens, Bizet had a fully developed talent.

The cantata tells the story of the conversion to Christianity of the Frankish King Clovis by his wife, Clotilde. It divides neatly into two halves, for Clovis, a tenor role

brilliantly and freshly sung by Philippe Do, emerges only halfway through. Until then Clotilde, brightly sung by Katarina Jovanovic, takes pride of place along with her father, Rémy, sung by Mark Schnaible. There are many moments to cherish, notably Clotilde's prayer, starting on an exquisitely delicate *pianissimo*. Otherwise Jovanovic is fearless in tackling exposed top notes cleanly and precisely. The tenor, Philippe Do, has no separate aria, although the central duet between Clovis and Clotilde culminates in a substantial solo for him. Do's diction is excellent (fortunate when the notes do not contain any texts, though otherwise they are ideally informative).

The *Te Deum* makes an ideal coupling. It was not published until 1971, and it seems that Bizet was so discouraged at the lukewarm reception it received from the Prix de Rome judges that he decided not to attempt any more religious music. After a grand choral opening, the tenor soloist enters with the first of his powerful solos. Though the *Te Deum* ends with the rather downbeat "Let me never be confounded", Bizet ignores that sentiment in a triumphant close. Altogether another highly enjoyable piece, adding to the attractions of a disc beautifully recorded in clean, well-balanced sound – in every way a delightful discovery.

Edward Greenfield

INTERVIEW

Jean-Claude Casadesus

Bizet was really a genius of melody. These scores date from when he was very young, 19 for *Clovis et Clotilde* and 20 for the *Te Deum*. Some friends told me years ago that *Clovis* existed but it was never played now. So I ran to the national library to see the manuscript. It was incredible to see that little masterpiece, a little bit kitsch but full of energy, and with those marvellous melodies!

He was influenced by Rossini and Schubert and Beethoven, and also a bit by Mozart. Bizet was from the south of France and it is clear in these pieces that he was a composer with sun in his soul. The music is optimistic but with great clarity, and it must be extremely well played. The sonority and

the balance and the dynamics are very important to get right. You have to let it all sing: in that sense it's vertical rather than horizontal music.

Gounod, Bizet's teacher, was obviously jealous of his pupil. He said that the only good things in *Carmen* came from him, which isn't true! Gounod's influences in Bizet emerge as kitsch.

Bizet died at 36: what more might he have done? I'm not sure. Some composers had great bursts of creativity and then death or nothing. But you can hear dissonances in some of his music that point to the future. I'd love to record more little-known Bizet – the one-act opera *Le prêtre*, for instance. Nobody knows that one!

Interview by James Inverne

reminiscent of Sergio Vartolo. Carmen Leoni is far more persuasive in Gesualdo's only surviving keyboard piece, here done on a clavichord, which has been recorded at exactly the right dynamic level in relation to the voices elsewhere. No disrespect intended to a fine recording when I nominate this "bonus track" as my favourite of the disc. Roll on Book 3. **Fabrice Fitch**

Mahler

Des Knaben Wunderhorn

Thomas Hampson *bar*

Wiener Virtuosen

DG © 477 9289GH (67' • DDD)

Des Knaben Wunderhorn – again – but not as we know it!



Thomas Hampson first gave us an extended *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* with newly authentic piano accompaniments in the mid-1990s (Teldec, 2/94) and his 2002 Paris recital with Wolfram Reiger at the piano has popped up variously on DVDs from TDK and Kultur. Make of it what you will, this is not the first time Hampson has tackled the songs usually allocated to a female voice and, unquestionably, no performer has ever had a more comprehensive knowledge of the manuscript sources. This time, in a project originated by his own Hampson Foundation but released on the yellow label, his aim has been to recover the intimate chamber-music style of dialogue which he argues is intrinsic to the orchestral versions. He could scarcely have found more distinguished collaborators than the musicians of the Wiener Virtuosen, a conductorless ensemble formed by the principal players of the Vienna Philharmonic. Mahler's own orchestrations are retained; the difference lies in the reduced numbers of string desks deployed.

Instrumentally speaking, the results are fabulous. It is Hampson's own contribution that raises doubts. Long-term admirers should not expect the immaculate finish, honeyed high-art gloss and occasional prissiness characteristic of the singer's youth. Instead we have a more autumnal brand of vocalisation, one that arguably suits these feisty, individualistic songs of ordinary folk. For the most part the ear adjusts to the drier timbre even as the heart may regret that such adjustment has become necessary. Unable to access his head voice as smoothly as in the past, he cannot make "Urlicht" soar and console in the manner of a Lucia Popp or a Dame Janet Baker. But perhaps that is beside the point. First-rate sound and fascinating notes add to the attractions of a deeply considered issue.

David Gutman

Machaut

Machaut Messe de Nostre Dame

Anonymous Adesto. Tribum. Benedicamus

Domino (Faenza Codex) **Andrieu** Armes, amours/O flour des flours (Chantilly Codex)

Bernard de Cluny Apollinis eclipsatur/Pantheon abluitur **Gilles d'Orléans** Alma polis religio/Axe poli cum artica (Chantilly Codex)

Pierre de Bruges Musicalis sciencia/ Sciencie laudabili (Ivrea Codex) **Vitry** Gratissima Virginis/Vos qui admiramini. Impudenter/Virtutibus laudabilis

Ensemble Musica Nova

Aeon © AECD1093 (76' • DDD)

A slow approach to a recording entering a crowded Machaut Mass market



Machaut's Mass has been recorded so often that one can hardly blame recording artists for wishing to try something new. Gérard Geay's introductory text is an account of the choices regarding *musica ficta* (that is, unwritten accidentals implied by the contrapuntal context) made by him and the singers of Musica Nova. These will surprise not a few listeners, particularly since Geay is, finally, somewhat vague as to precise details. But it's symptomatic of the fixation in certain quarters on questions of pitch that he is completely silent on an aspect that some will find far more problematic: the very slow tempi adopted in all the isorhythmic sections – that is, most of the Mass. In this, Musica Nova strike out pretty much on their own (though such tempi were more common, say, 40 years ago); but it's a question of what is gained by such an approach, which is at odds not only with the tempi chosen for the syllabic movements (*Gloria* and *Credo*) but also the motets (all isorhythmic) that make up the rest of the disc. I should note that the *Kyrie* invocations here alternate not with sung plainsong but with organ diminutions on the chant taken from the Faenza Codex – a sensible choice in view of the length of the sections.

To my ear, Musica Nova's sound is less well suited to Machaut or Vitry than it was to Ockeghem. A clue to the reason is the success of the three male soloists in tackling the motet *Musicalis sciencia*: I freely confess to feeling that single voices do this repertory incomparably better justice – a sentiment reinforced by the disappointingly flat *Armes, amours* that rounds off the disc, in which virtually nothing of the text may be discerned.

Fabrice Fitch

R Strauss • Wolf

R Strauss Vier Lieder, Op 27. Mein Herz ist stumm, Op 19 No 6. Du meines Herzes

Krönelein, Op 21 No 2. Meinem Kinde, Op 37

No 3. Muttertänzelei, Op 43 No 2. Für fünfzehn Pfennige, Op 36 No 2. Nichts, Op 10 No 2

Wolf Mörike-Lieder – Auf einer Wanderung; Im Frühling, Auf ein altes Bild; Begegnung; Das verlassene Mägdlein; Er ist's; Nimmersatte Liebe. Sechs Gedichte von Alte Wiesen

Angelika Kirchschlager *mez* **Roger Vignoles** *pf* Wigmore Hall Live © WHLIVE0040 (63' • DDD • T/U)

Recorded live, February 25, 2010

A Romantic recital from an ever-welcome visitor to Wigmore Hall



Few Lieder singers match Angelika Kirchschlager in vibrant stage personality. Even heard "blind", the Austrian mezzo vividly illuminates each of

Wolf's nature rhapsodies, vignettes and character sketches. "Auf ein altes Bild", Wolf's remote, other-worldly meditation on the Christ-child, is both delicate and intense, the climactic twist of "Kreuzes Stamm" pointed without over-emphasis. Encouraged by the ever-imaginative Roger Vignoles, Kirchschlager nicely balances tenderness, flustered embarrassment and gentle amusement in "Begegnung", while the inherent warmth of her mezzo makes the abandoned girl of "Das verlassene Mägdlein" sound less of a wan ingénue than usual. If her voice sounds slightly unsettled in "Auf einer Wanderung", the recital's opener, I can forgive some gusty phrasing for the sake of Kirchschlager's generous commitment and verbal sensitivity, with the song's ecstatic climax perfectly caught.

In the wry and/or touching character studies of Wolf's *Six Songs in the Old Style*, to poems by Gottfried Keller, Kirchschlager the born stage animal is in her element. She and Vignoles "sell" the suggestive "Tretet ein", where a captive knight ironically symbolises the bonds of matrimony, with the sly, salacious wit of a cabaret song. In "Singt mein Schatz" she celebrates female sexuality with the relish of an Alpine Carmen, while her wickedly timed and coloured portrait of the alcoholic charcoal-burner's wife ("Das Köhlerweib") is enlivened by volleys of acerbic laughter from Vignoles's keyboard. At the other end of the spectrum, Kirchschlager touchingly realises the sad-sweet, valedictory meditation of the old peasant woman in "Wie glänzt der helle Mond".

For all her full-blooded commitment and care for words, Kirchschlager's coppery mezzo is not quite the ideal instrument in Strauss's popular Op 27 group, written as a wedding gift for Pauline and predicated on the soaring, silvery radiance of the soprano voice. A want of a true, silken *legato* is also a limitation in the exquisite lullaby "Meinem Kinde". But "Morgen" is moving in its unsentimental sincerity, while, predictably, the character songs are brilliantly etched: the garrulous, self-

satisfied mother in “Muttertändelei”, or the tale of the 15 pennies in “Für fünfzehn Pfennige”, with its astringently mocking pay-off. Presentation, as usual in this series, is exemplary (texts, translations and a perceptive essay by Hilary Finch), and the recording rightly treats voice and keyboard as equals.

Richard Wigmore

Wolf

Italienisches Liederbuch

Christoph Prégardien *ten*

Julia Kleiter *sop* Hilko Dumno *pf*

Challenge Classics ㉔ CC72378 (76' • DDD/DSD)

Lovers quarrel and make peace in Wolf's un-sunny Italian Songbook



One of the wonders of the age was the full house which invariably assembled at London's Festival Hall when the Schwarzkopf/Fischer-Dieskau/Moore

combination gave a programme devoted to the songs of Hugo Wolf. But I often wondered how many in the audience had arrived to hear the *Italian Songbook* in the pleasant expectation of sunny tunes which were not to be forthcoming. The writer of the introductory notes to the present recording comments on the melodiousness, accessibility and attractive brevity of the songs, and that is probably true of five or six; but the complete collection is another matter. The brevity of each means that (for a non-German speaking audience especially) concentration needs to be unrelenting. The “accessibility” can hardly extend to an appreciation of detail; and I doubt whether “melodiousness” would be a word on most people's lips as they emerged from a recital of all 46.

The ordering of the 46 can make a big difference. Here, they are grouped so that (roughly) we start with the lovers getting along well with each other, then (at greater length) quarrelling, and finally making peace. Particularly effective is the almost sublime reconciliation of “Wir haben beide lange Zeit geschwiegen” and “Sterb' ich, so hüllt in Blumen meine Glieder”. But oh dear, it's a long stretch of provocation, pertness and blazing fury before we get there.

And, importantly, whether in the voices themselves or some hard-toned recording, these voices have little that endears them to the hearing. Prégardien ranks among the most respected artists of our time and often he sings here with vivid expression in terms of verbal intelligence – though not, if one may put it thus, with the face, where there's something curiously inert. His partner, Julia Kleiter, sounds very well when she sings softly but too quickly becomes edgy and uneven. The pianist, Hilko Dumno, makes a strong impression and I cannot remember ever having heard the

fearsome postlude to “Ich hab, in Penna” played with such panache. But afterwards I played sequences from five other recordings, and each of them, I'm afraid, with more enjoyment than this. **John Steane**

'Cecus'

Anonymous Romance de la muerte del muy esclarecido rey don Felipe **Agricola** Cecus non judicat de coloribus. Fortuna desperate. Si dederò sompnium oculis meis. L'eure est venue. Je n'ay dueil que de vous **Anchieta** Musica quid defles **Champion** De profundis clamavi **Josquin Desprez** Nymphes des bois **La Rue** Plover, gemier, crier/Requiem. Delicta juventutis. Absalon, fili mi. Doleo super te

Graindelavoix / Björn Schmelzer

Glossa ㉔ GCDP32105 (79' • DDD)

Frustrating and impressive by turns, Graindelavoix plough a distinctive furrow



This recording takes as its centrepiece one of Alexander Agricola's most famous pieces, whose Latin title tells us that “a blind man cannot distinguish colours”. If

the title is the composer's (it's weird enough), then his meaning may forever elude us, even if director Björn Schmelzer's introductory essay (it's long enough) has a valiant go at interpreting it. Schmelzer uses *Cecus*'s two parts as bookends of an Agricola section; this is preceded by some of the finest pieces by his sometime colleague, Pierre de la Rue, and a lament for their employer, Philip the Fair; and followed by a motet mourning Agricola himself. It's the first recording of a piece that looks slight on the page but is moving enough in performance. Whether it all hangs together as a programme I'm not entirely sure but it's good of Graindelavoix to tackle some of the famous pieces of the time (*Nymphes des bois* and *Absalon fili mi*, whoever wrote it...) along with some obscure ones.

What I wrote last year of Graindelavoix's previous recording mostly applies to this new disc, though the “Corsican monks” sonority is marginally toned down. The microtonal inflections remain and are applied with considerable taste. In *Cecus*, Schmelzer contrives to fill out the three voices so that a richer sound results. This is done without doing too much violence to the contrapuntal fabric, though the same can't be said everywhere (try *Si dederò*). Voices or instruments on their own work well (*Cecus* and *Je n'ay dueil*, with its subtle asynchrony of parts, are in their way exceptional), but their combination can be maddening; and Schmelzer's occasional fiddling about with pieces' forms (as in La Rue's *Plover, gemier*) seems deliberately perverse; but in a disc with an Agricola theme, that's perhaps appropriate... **Fabrice Fitch**

'Le Chansonnier Cordiforme'



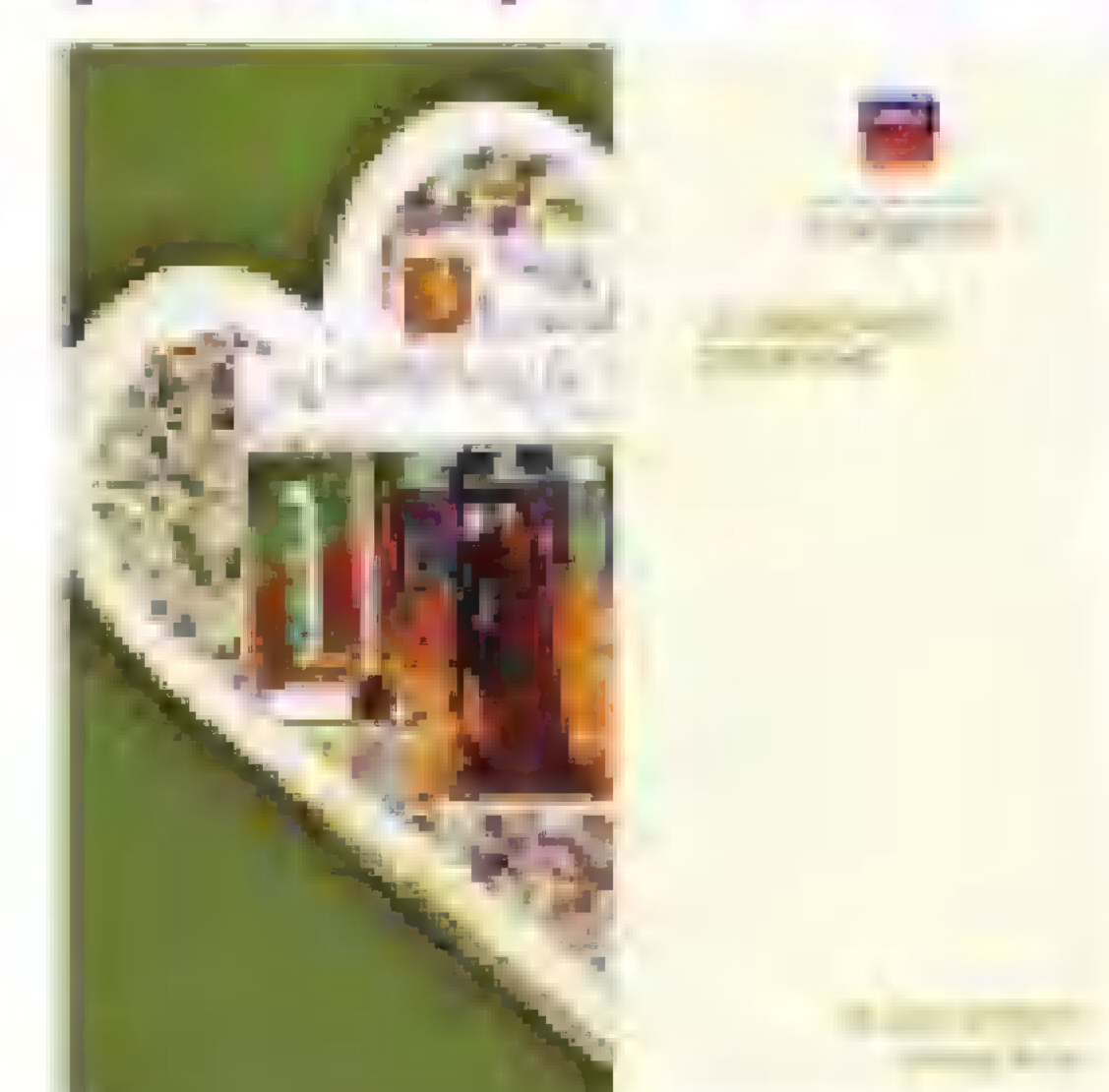
The complete music from the 15th-century Chansonnier Cordiforme, compiled during the 1470s and containing music by **Dufay, Binchois, Ockeghem, Busnoys** and other contemporary composers **The Consort of Musicke** (Emma Kirkby *sop* Margaret Philpot *contr* John York Skinner *counterten* John Elwes *ten* David Thomas *bass* Lewis Jones *fl* Alison Crum, Trevor Jones *fiddles* Frances Kelly *bp* Christopher Page *lute*) /

Anthony Rooley *bass lute*

Decca Eloquence ㉔ ㉔ 480 1819 (164' • ADD)

Recorded 1979. From L'Oiseau-Lyre ㉔ D186D4 (11/80)

Nearly 30 years old but still unequalled: possibly one of the reissues of the year



As collectable reissues go, this one's a “no-brainer”: made in 1979, it's the only complete recording of a late-medieval songbook. *The Chansonnier*

Cordiforme is probably the only such source naturally to lend itself to the undertaking: first, because of the relatively small number of songs it contains (only 43); second, because of their inordinately high quality, encompassing many of the “greatest hits” of the third quarter of the 15th century. It's also the most beautiful object of its kind to come down to us, as is now evident from the exceptional facsimile that was made in 2009.

Among early-music aficionados the recording itself has acquired something close to mythical status. Anthony Rooley and David Fallows gathered some of the finest singers available (including Emma Kirkby, Margaret Philpot, John Elwes and David Thomas), and the cast of instrumentalists includes a young lutenist, Christopher Page, who would found Gothic Voices shortly thereafter, with Philpot one of his lead singers. Within five years, Decca would revisit the “complete” format to two of the central song composers of the time, first Dufay, then Ockeghem. So these recording sessions marked a step-change in the understanding and appreciation of 15th-century music; sadly, one hardly imagines such a heroic project being undertaken nowadays by any label, let alone a major one.

Inevitably, perhaps, the passage of time has been kinder to some individual tracks than to others, and clearly, a handful of songs are not of the same order as the rest. But hearing it again from beginning to end, one is struck by the nearly flawless interventions of John Elwes, whose “De tous biens plaine” sounds as fresh as it must have done in 1980, and by those of Margaret Philpot, whose career was so tragically cut short (try her in “Comme femme desconfortee” and “Le souvenir de vous me tue”). It's also true that there are easily a dozen songs that have been recorded

many times since, but never better. A CD transfer, made nearly 20 years ago by Japanese Decca, was never widely available. If you've never heard a 15th-century song in your life, get this now.

Fabrice Fitch

'Dinastia Borgia'

'Church and Power in the Renaissance'

Part 1 – Paths to power: the origins and expansion of a dynasty, c1238-1492. Part 2 – The culmination and end of a dream, 1492-1509.

Part 3 – From the turbulent "reign" of Alexander VI to the spiritual triumph of St Francis Borgia, 1510-1671

Montserrat Figueras *sop* Pascal Bertin *countertenor*

Lluís Vilamajó *ten* Marc Mauillon *bar* La Capella

Reial de Catalunya; Hespèrion XXI / Jordi Savall

Alia Vox Ⓢ Ⓣ AVSA9875 (3h 33' • DDD/DSD • T/t/N)

Includes DVD documentary about the Dinastia

Borgia project

Another lavish Alia Vox production traces four centuries of Borgia history



Presenting history via sound – not merely illuminating neglected chapters of music history – lies behind Jordi Savall's series of "livre-CDs". This includes evocative sound effects and recitation in

original languages with something close to period pronunciation, as well as vocal and instrumental performances. Taking as his starting-point a carefully devised chronology of related events, Savall uses it as his warp, deftly weaving a rich tissue of plausible impressions, using combinations of voices and instruments as his weft.

One might expect that, with the Borgias, all roads would lead to Rome, but in this case most lead back to Catalonia, for the Borgias were actually the Borjas of Valencia and Savall himself is Catalanian. So, while two members of the Borja family did become popes (Callistus III and Alexander VI), the *livre*-CD is occasioned by the 500th birthday one of their heirs, Francis Borja, born in Gandia in 1510. The local city council was persuaded to add its support to the usual array of benefactors underwriting this three-disc project (illustrated in an accompanying DVD), which, with the exception of a few tracks, was recorded at Cardona Castle, near Barcelona.

As before, the *livre* is lavishly illustrated with musical scores and art, its texts – including five essays – printed in six languages. The recording covers four centuries, exploring the origins of the Borgia family, the Muslim, Jewish and Christian cultures that once flourished in the region, the Borgia papacies, key contemporaries, the decline of the family and its redemption through the life of Francis, who was canonised in 1671. The choice of

related events and music to illustrate it is masterful. Again, Savall is working with music that is, more often than not, in shorthand: either monophonic or, if polyphonic, then lacking orchestration. To bring it to life, he has relied on his artistic ear, particular vision and thirst for knowledge, while simultaneously interesting us in a largely unfamiliar story. One striking example is "The Song of the Valencian Sybil", taken from the *Gandia Songbook*.

Savall's own presence, as both leader and principal viol player, can always be felt. His string, wind, brass and percussion players are superb; Andrew Lawrence-King, performing on a sequence of different harps, provides exquisite improvisations, introductions and accompaniments. As in earlier projects, Savall augments Hespèrion XXI with exotic period instruments, mainly in improvisatory tracks and to add colour. His Capella Reial de Catalunya is an incredibly adaptable ensemble, his soloists too. His wife, soprano Montserrat Figueras, makes beautifully positioned cameo appearances on each disc. Hats off!

Julie Anne Sadie

'Düben Delights'

Albrici Omnia, quae fecit Deus. Sinfonia a 2

Bütner Laudate pueri Dominum Gnessel Venite

ad me Hanff Ich will den Herrn loben allezeit

Pfleger Justorum animae in manu Dei sunt

Philetari Salve rex Christe Theile Ach, dass Ich

hören sollte dass Gott

Anna Jobrant *sop* Düben United

Footprint Ⓢ FRCD049 (52' • DDD)

Anna Jobrant and Co offer a selection of treats from an important collection



And what, you might well ask, are "Düben Delights"? Gustav Düben was one of a family of musicians who held important posts at the Swedish court in the 17th and 18th centuries. He amassed a large collection of music at the University of Uppsala: this disc contains pieces from that collection. The members of Düben United are described in terms of the chocolates pictured on the booklet. Once past this ghastly bit of whimsy, you will find a programme of largely unknown music that is well worth hearing.

Over 100 pieces in the collection are by Buxtehude; there is nothing of his here, but several pieces are in the same North German vein. Crato Bütner (1616-79) was an organist and director of music in Danzig. *Laudate pueri Dominum* begins with a cheerful introduction for two violins, whose semiquaver runs are taken up by the voice. Didaco Philetari was a priest in Rome: *Salve rex Christe*, appropriately adapted for

Lutheran consumption from a *Salve regina*, is scored for a larger string group, with what sounds like a viola da gamba on the top line. The playing is rich and arrestingly beautiful. The motet by Theile is nicely constructed, with the opening two-note phrase returning at the end.

Anna Jobrant sounds shrill at the top of her range but her coloratura is accurate and she blends well with the instruments. This enterprising recording deserves support.

Richard Lawrence

'Mia Yrmana Fremosa'

'Medieval woman's songs of love and pain'

Triphonia (Amanda Simmons *voc/Romansque bp/ tamio/cast/scallop shells* Gaby Bultmann *voc/viel/psaltery/*

recs/stringed tabor/bells/frame drum/riqq Leila

Schoeneich *voc/recs/stringed tabor/frame drum*)

Challenge Classics Ⓢ CC72385 (71' • DDD)

A varied programme of early song from a new ensemble



Triphonia is an ensemble from Berlin comprising three women, all of whom sing as well as playing instruments: Gaby Bultmann

specialises in bowed instruments, Amanda Simmons in harp, Leila Schoeneich in recorder. Although all three have been involved in various recordings over the past two decades, this is apparently their debut recording as a group. They display a wide variety of instrumental colours and often lively playing of substantial virtuosity. They are particularly resourceful in their percussion, drawing very heavily on the Arabic traditions.

Their programme goes through various kinds of women's songs in the Middle Ages, neatly grouped according to theme, and ranging through most available languages (just no Italian or Provençal). Two of the most energetic and successful performances here are of the *Carmina Burana* song "Ich was ein chint" and of the cantiga "De vergonna nos guardar". Here they pick up on the excitement of the texts and often throw caution to the wind, with exciting effects. In the two longest pieces here, the cycle of Martin Codax and Neidhart's "Blößen wir den anger ligen sâhen", it could be thought that they impeded the flow of the music by being too eager to enliven it with different colours and different riffs.

Quite often the tuning sounds less than ideal, particularly the fifths: that may be something to do with theories about temperament (there are plenty of these floating around), but it is all the same a touch distracting. In general the performances are spirited and attractive.

David Fallows

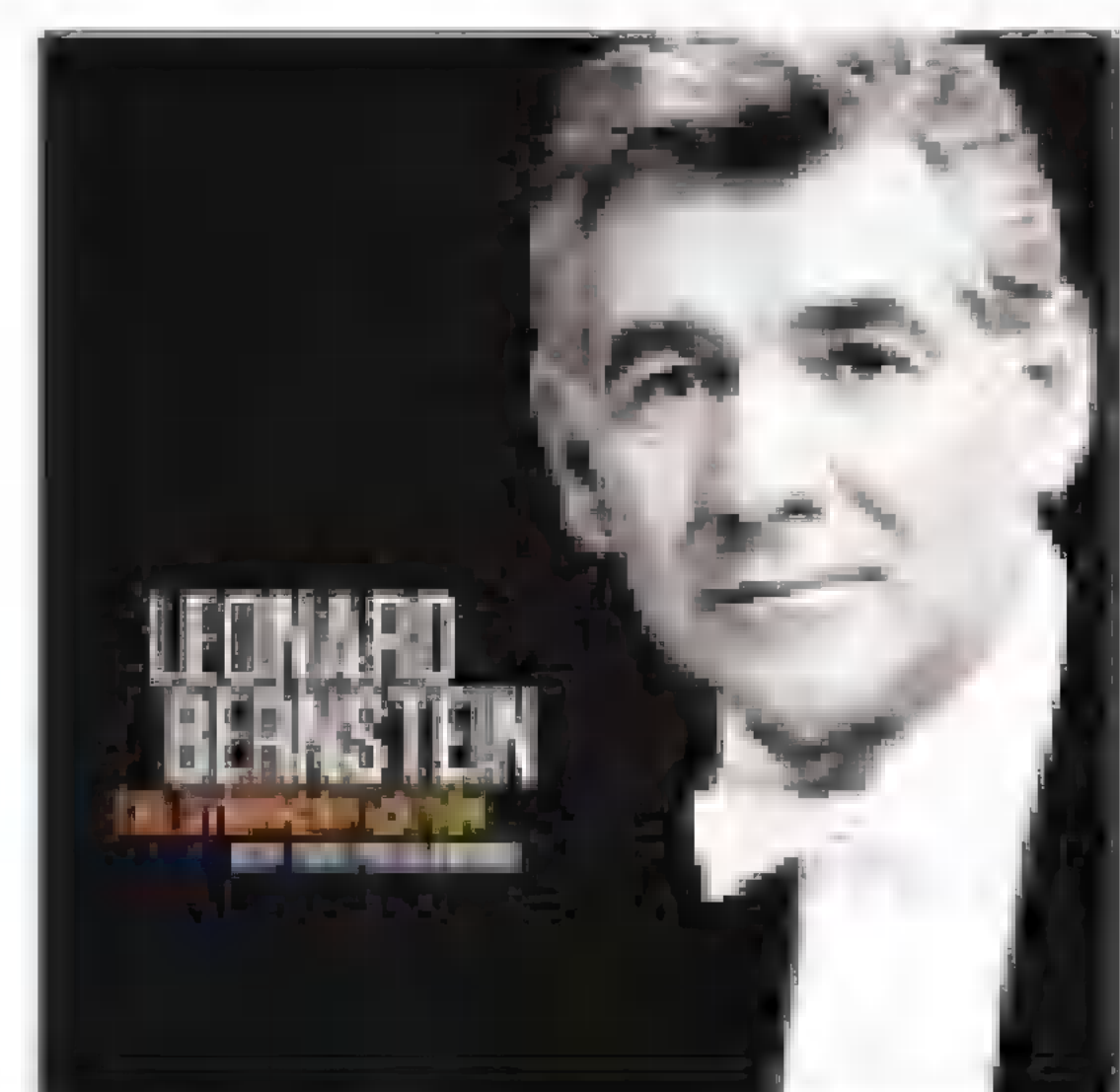
ROUND-UP

Boxing Bernstein

Philip Clark cautiously welcomes two box-sets by America's classical music megastar

I can't presume to know anything about your domestic arrangements but my house is already packed, foundations to loft, with CDs. A time now to draw a line: I must stop duplicating music I already have. Back in the day - remember when Sony issued their Complete Stravinsky Edition? - box-sets were something special, expensive, a rare treat, containing music you didn't already own. But in these austere times, box-sets have become a cash cow - a honeytrap to snare susceptible collector types into crossing major-label palms with silver for continually repackaged hits.

Leonard Bernstein: The Symphony Edition - 60 CDs anthologising everything Bernstein recorded during his Columbia years with "symphony" in the title - comes with the justification that the concept of "symphony", its weighty past and faltering future, obsessed Bernstein. Which is fair enough



- except of course devoted Bernsteinistas already have his New York Philharmonic Mahler, Beethoven, Haydn and Sibelius symphonies on CD, which are destined to remain forever unopened here as attention focuses inevitably on rare-to-disc exotica: Randall Thompson's Second Symphony, Harold Shapero's Symphony for Classical Orchestra, Bernstein's 1965 Vaughan Williams Fourth, 1976 Shostakovich Fourteenth and 1969 Bruckner Ninth.

To be perfectly honest, seeing great recordings stacked up like packets of broken biscuits at the supermarket makes me feel slightly melancholic; but, more pointedly, what niche goodies *aren't* Sony reissuing as they plunder their back catalogue for an easy crust? And while

lessons have obviously been learnt from last year's debacle surrounding the Miles Davis Complete Album Collection (where flimsy cardboard sleeves smeared glue over the CDs, rendering them unplayable), production values here are no match for the Glenn Gould or Vladimir Horowitz Complete Original Jacket Collection sets. Even as I write, the Bernstein booklet is detaching itself from its spine...

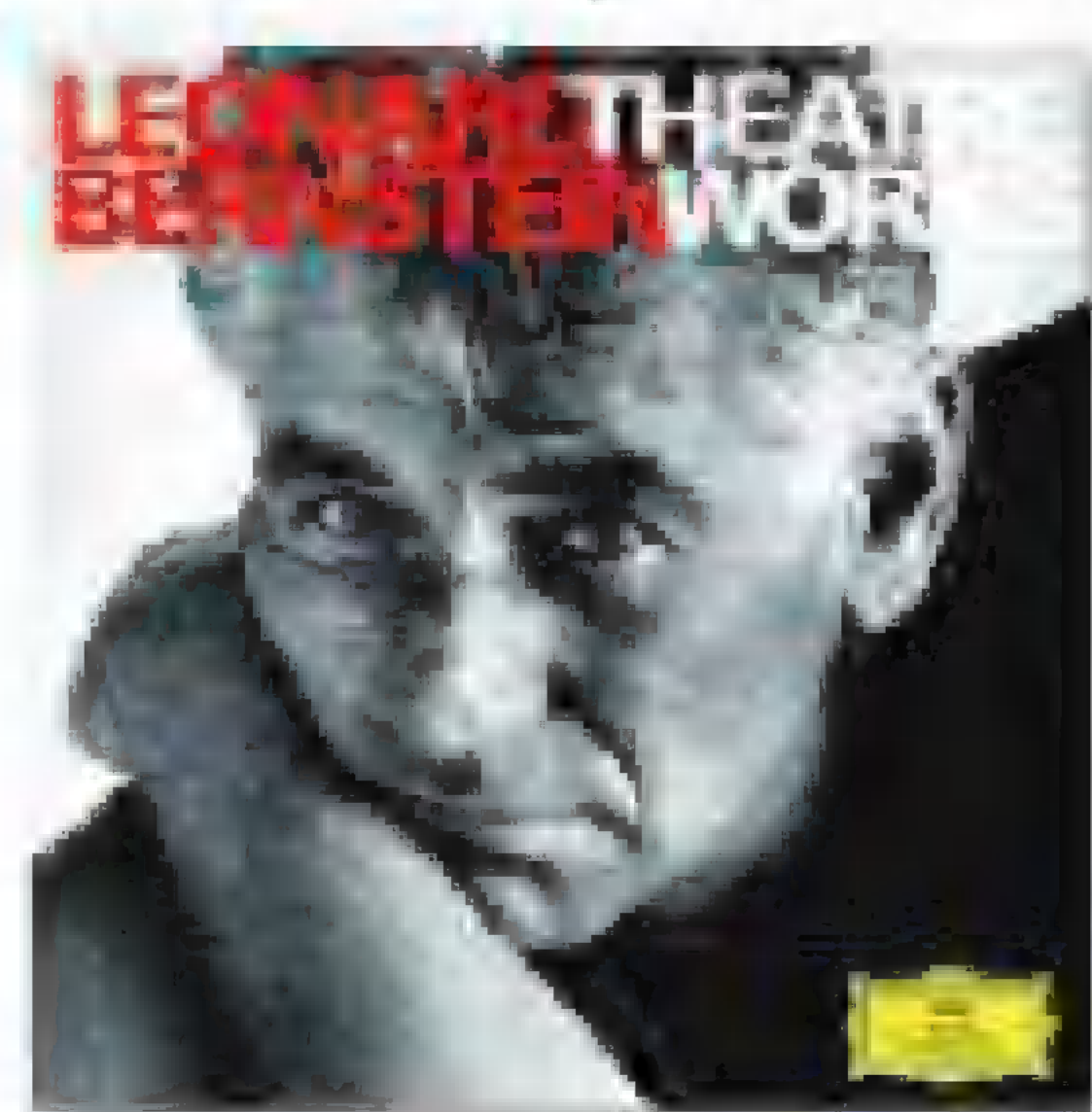
And Bernstein's greatest fear was that symphonic form itself had detached from the spine of the tradition - that functional tonality, which once held symphonies in place, was no longer how composers were choosing to glue their music together. The illustrated talk which accompanies his bracing guts-and-plumbing 1958 Charles Ives Second admits as much; but Bernstein's defence of symphonic form led to some repertoire choices which I can only presume seemed a good idea at the time.

David Diamond's Fourth Symphony and William Schuman's Eighth operate like symphonies were always supposed to - themes are exposed, developed, recapitulated and loose ends are efficiently/neatly knitted together; the Schuman in particular deals up intriguing harmonic ambiguities. But both composers lose their material inside schooled process, as though they've forgotten that a "symphony" is an idea as much as a form. Bernstein himself understood this instinctively and his three symphonies - *Jeremiah*, *The Age of Anxiety* (with Philippe Entremont, not Lukas Foss), *Kaddish* - stand out from the crowd, because like great symphonists do, they question, destroy even, the form as a way to reassemble it: the symphony as a metaphor for where music is at. In the great scheme of music, Randall Thompson's Second is another period piece, but it's interesting to gauge Thompson's, as distinct from Copland's, impact on Bernstein. Is it just me, or did the spirit of

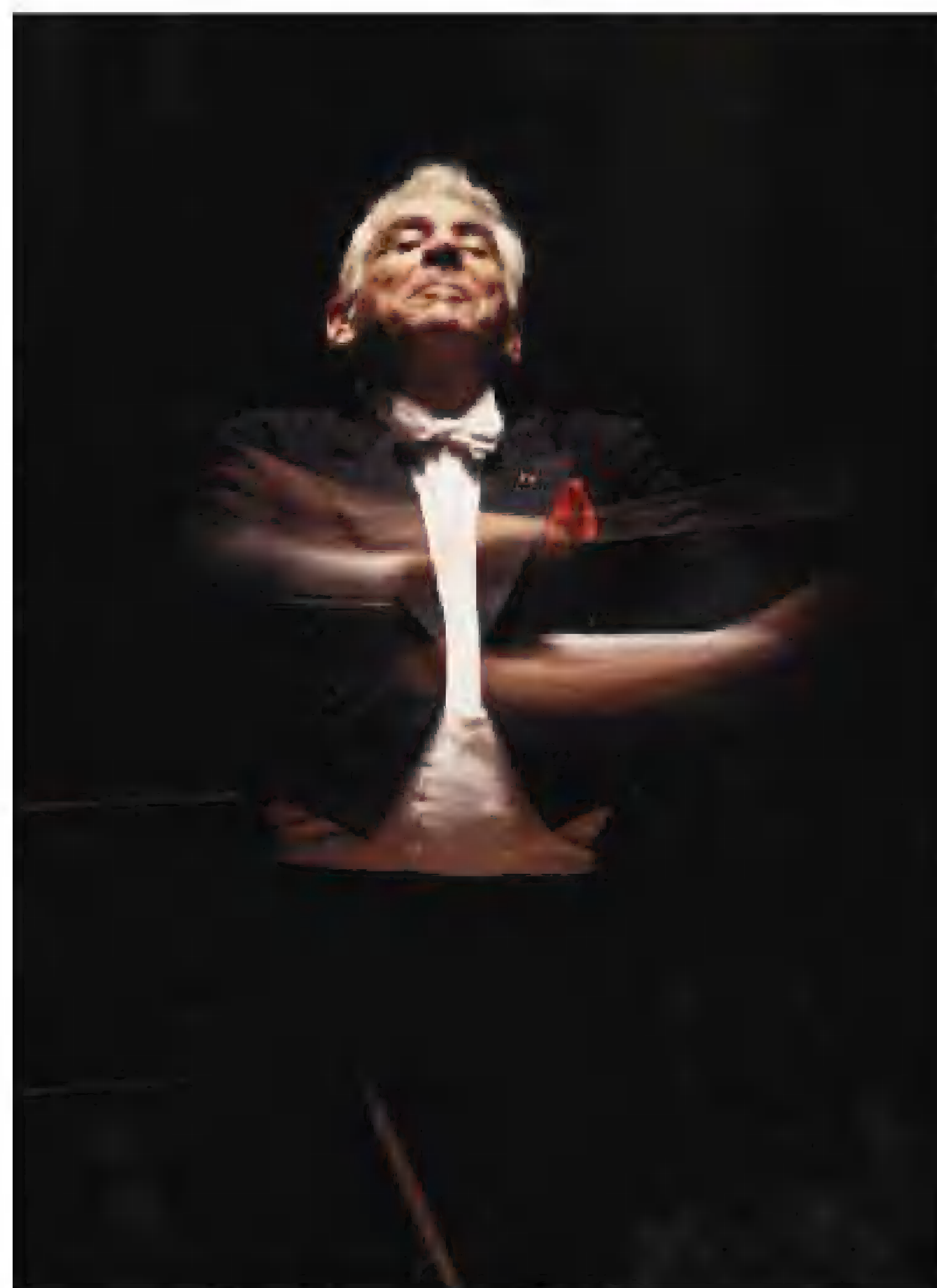
his symphony's jazz-infused *Scherzo* leak into the *Scherzo* of Bernstein's *Jeremiah*?

That 1965 performance of Vaughan Williams's Fourth stopped me dead in my tracks. The white-hot trip of the first movement, torched by the lusty swell of the NYPO strings, reveals Bernstein's empathy for a composer with whom he was not often associated; and a similar rosette goes to his 1967 Hindemith Symphony in E flat major. We know all there is to know about his groundbreaking 1960s Mahler cycle but let's not forget Bernstein's pioneering sweat on behalf of Carl Nielsen, and the supercharged, serrated energy of his 1962 Nielsen Fifth. Other standout moments: off-the-leash performances of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*, Beethoven's Seventh (both 1964) and Haydn's *Drum Roll* (1970); and that rarely cited Bruckner Ninth is opulently detailed, involved and spontaneous - curiously a more settled account than Bernstein's patchy 1990s Vienna Philharmonic redux.

Deutsche Grammophon's seven-CD **Leonard Bernstein: Theatre Works** sneaks past a very significant reissue - the first widely available appearance on CD since 1987 of Bernstein's late-period opera *A Quiet Place* (Chester Ludgin, Beverly Morgan et al with the Austrian Radio SO conducted by Bernstein), is



secreted among the inevitable *West Side Story* and *Candide* (conducted Bernstein), *On the Town* (Tilson Thomas) and *A White House Cantata* (Nagano). Without wanting to fall into box-set politicking again, what a shame this reissue feels so half-hearted. There's no libretto, and the extended essay librettist Stephen Wadsworth contributed to the original release about the opera's troubled gestation and his



day-to-day dealings with an ailing, equally troubled Bernstein is much missed: instead *Gramophone's* David Gutman writes a succinct overview of all five theatre works.

Roundly condemned as flabby and muddled (and they were among the more generous tributes), *A Quiet Place* has marinated nicely while no one was listening. Which is not to say the faults have gone way: conceived as a sequel to his 1952 one-act opera *Trouble in Tahiti*, Bernstein wound up buttressing his newly created structure by deploying the earlier piece as flashback sequences. Two decades on, though, I can live with that compromise because *A Quiet Place* can be heard as the summation Bernstein intended.

Opening with the same angsty chord that brought

Trouble in Tahiti to its unsettling, unresolved conclusion, *A Quiet Place* challenged Bernstein's compositional certainties and technical nuts and bolts more absolutely than any piece since his *Kaddish* Symphony in 1963. Twelve-note technique puts those structural and stylistic disjoints that fuel *Mass* and *Songfest* into a fresh context. It puts distance between Bernstein and his material, the piece folding in and out of itself like living an objective view of a peculiarly obsessive, unshakeable nightmare. Finally, he'd hit on a workable accommodation (as opposed to a dialectic) between tonality and atonality. Even the blues number in Act 1's finale dissolves back into the flow. Why we weren't we smart enough to recognise *A Quiet Place's* qualities at the time? 🎧

THE RECORDINGS

Various Cpsrs Symphony Edition **Bernstein**
Sony © (60 discs) 88697 68365-2

Bernstein Theatre Works **Various artists**
DG ® ⑦ 477 8853GB7

Opera

A tale by Hoffmann • Vivaldi for tenor • Dame Joan Sutherland's Puritani premiere

Handel

Flavio, re de' Longobardi

Tim Mead *countertenor*..... Flavio
Iestyn Davies *countertenor*..... Guido
Rosemary Joshua *sop*..... Emilia
Hilary Summers *contr*..... Teodata
Renata Pokupić *mez*..... Vitige
Thomas Walker *ten*..... Ugone
Andrew Foster-Williams *bass-bar*..... Lotario
Early Opera Company / Christian Curnyn
Chandos © 2 CHAN0773 (146' • DDD • S/T/V)

Not a great success in Handel's lifetime but Flavio is exceptionally entertaining



Premiered at the King's Theatre in May 1723, *Flavio* is one of those Handel operas – *Serse* and *Partenope* are others – that takes a wryly amused view of the

power struggles, bulging egos and heroic posturing endemic to *opera seria*. With its pungent mix of comedy, ironic detachment and near-tragedy, it now seems one the composer's most endearing stage works. Handel's aristocratic audiences, though, evidently preferred operas of a loftier cast. Despite the presence of the two biggest stars of the day, Cuzzoni and Senesino, *Flavio* ran for just eight performances (*Giulio Cesare*, its immediate successor, netted 13), and was revived just once in Handel's lifetime.

Set in a legendary Dark Ages when Britain was supposedly ruled by Lombardy, the plot hinges on the whims of the oversexed, cynically manipulative King Flavio, whose lust for the beautiful – and far from innocent – Teodata threatens to wreak havoc on everyone around him. Opening with a delectable nocturnal love duet for Teodata and her secret lover Vitige, Act 1 is light in tone, with a succession of arias in graceful and/or jaunty dance rhythms. Then, as the plot takes a darker, potentially tragic turn, Handel responds with some of his most piercing arias, above all for the heroine Emilia (the Cuzzoni role), whose father Lotario has been killed in a duel by her fiancé Guido. Lotario's death apart, all ends well, of course, with Emilia and Guido reconciled and reunited after she has feared him dead, and the ever-capricious Flavio "punishing" Vitige by granting him the hand of Teodata.

Christian Curnyn and his spruce period band finely catch the tone and *tinta* of this delectable opera. Tempi – mobile but never frenetic – are aptly chosen, rhythms buoyant. Yet Curnyn gives due weight to the opera's graver moments, whether in Emilia's haunting *siciliano* aria that closes Act 2, cleaving mournfully to the minor key virtually throughout, or Guido's desolate final aria, in the rare, "extreme" key of B flat minor. The singers, many of them Curnyn regulars, dispatch their arias with fine Handelian style and spirit, and, crucially, bring real theatrical vitality to their recitative exchanges. Handel curiously cast the part of Teodata (written for the deep contralto Anastasia Robinson) for a lower voice than that of her lover Vitige. But while her timbre more naturally suggests gravity than levity, Hilary Summers catches Teodata's teasing, flirtatious nature through inflection and phrasing. As her lover Vitige, Croatian mezzo Renata Pokupić sings with grace, verve and (not least in Vitige's jealous outburst in Act 3) an exciting flame in the tone; and Thomas Walker and the sonorous bass Andrew Foster-Williams excel in the blustering, mock-heroic coloratura arias for the squabbling councillors Ugone and Lotario.

As Flavio, Tim Mead sings smoothly and mellifluously without always catching to the full the mingled charm, absurdity and menace of the king's character. Iestyn Davies, in the Senesino role of Guido, has slightly more "bite" to his countertenor, and rises impressively both to the anguished fury of his Act 2 aria "Rompo i lacci" and the profound pathos of his final aria. Always a lovely Handel singer, Rosemary Joshua brings to Emilia's glorious music a pure, lucent tone and a vivid sense of character, growing from initial blitheness, through her aching farewell to Guido – one of those ravishing, timeless Handelian moments – to the grieving intensity of her *siciliano* lament for her father. The sole rival *Flavio*, directed by René Jacobs (Harmonia Mundi, 7/90), has been rightly praised. But on balance I'd recommend this beautifully recorded new version of Handel's flavoursome tragicomedy, for its (on the whole) superior cast and orchestral playing and for Curnyn's direction, stylish, lively and unaffected where Jacobs can be irritatingly interventionist.

Richard Wigmore

Handel

'Ombra cara'

Amadigi di Gaula – Sento la gioia. **Agrippina** – Voi, che udite il mio lamento. **Riccardo Primo** – Agitato da fiere tempeste. **Tolomeo** – Stille amare. **Orlando** – Vaghe pupille; Fammi combattere. **Rodrigo** – Passacaille. **Radamisto** – Ombra cara di mia sposa. **Rodelinda** – Fra tempeste funeste; Con rauco mormorio^a. **Sosarme** – Per le porte del tormento^a

Bejun Mehta *countertenor*

Rosemary Joshua *sop*

Freiburg Baroque Orchestra / René Jacobs
Harmonia Mundi © HMC902077 (72' • DDD)

Includes DVD 'making of' feature

An impressive recital of countertenor arias – bar the ornamentation



Bejun Mehta's debut solo disc is more adventurous than hackneyed Handel recital programmes often are. Some of the selections were written originally for Senesino, although four of the nine featured arias were not – perhaps Harmonia Mundi's back-cover blurb name-checking the famous castrato was over-interpreted from Reinhard Strohm's excellent booklet-note. The running order hangs together well, and several unpredictable choices come off brilliantly: Amadigi's "Sento la gioia" (featuring bold trumpet playing by Friedemann Immer) is a fine opener, Riccardo Primo's "Agitata da fiere tempeste" is delivered impressively, and the bassoon line in Bertarido's lament "Con rauco mormorio" is played compassionately (and this particular choice from *Rodelinda* makes a nice change from the usual "Dove sei, amato bene"). The disc concludes sweetly with the duet "Per le porte del tormento", which, although a bit laboured in places, allows Mehta and Rosemary Joshua plenty of space for loveliness.

Mehta's singing can be astonishingly good, but from time to time lines are devoid of sympathetic appoggiaturas, and occasionally embellishments are unstylish – such as a nasty chromatic ornament in an otherwise enthralling performance of Tolomeo's suicide scene "Stille amare". He applies more vibrato in slow arias than I would prefer but his precise coloratura in direct faster arias is superb (an energised Orlando's "Fammi

combattere"). The Freiburg Baroque Orchestra plays excellently, particularly during a passacaglia from *Rodrigo*. Curiously, the most familiar music emerges least convincingly, such as Radamisto's "Ombra cara": it sounds beautifully pathetic but utterly lacks the malevolent aspect of the hero's vow to carry out a vendetta to avenge his supposedly dead wife (Max Emanuel Cencic's recent recital – Virgin, 8/10 – contained a much more persuasive characterisation). The mad scene from *Orlando* is grossly over-egged by conductor René Jacobs in some passages and wilfully under-egged in others. The Belgian maverick cannot resist intervening with artificial orchestral effects to reinforce that Orlando has lost his mind (although some of the unexpected softer phrases work a treat). Like no other conductor of Baroque vocal music, he juxtaposes insightful excitement and annoying interference, sometimes even in the same passage of music (eg the stilted mannerisms of an exaggerated "Voi, che udite" from *Agrippina*). Unstylish organ continuo abounds; but generally, this curate's egg is one of Jacobs's better-directed Handel recordings. **David Vickers**

ETA Hoffmann

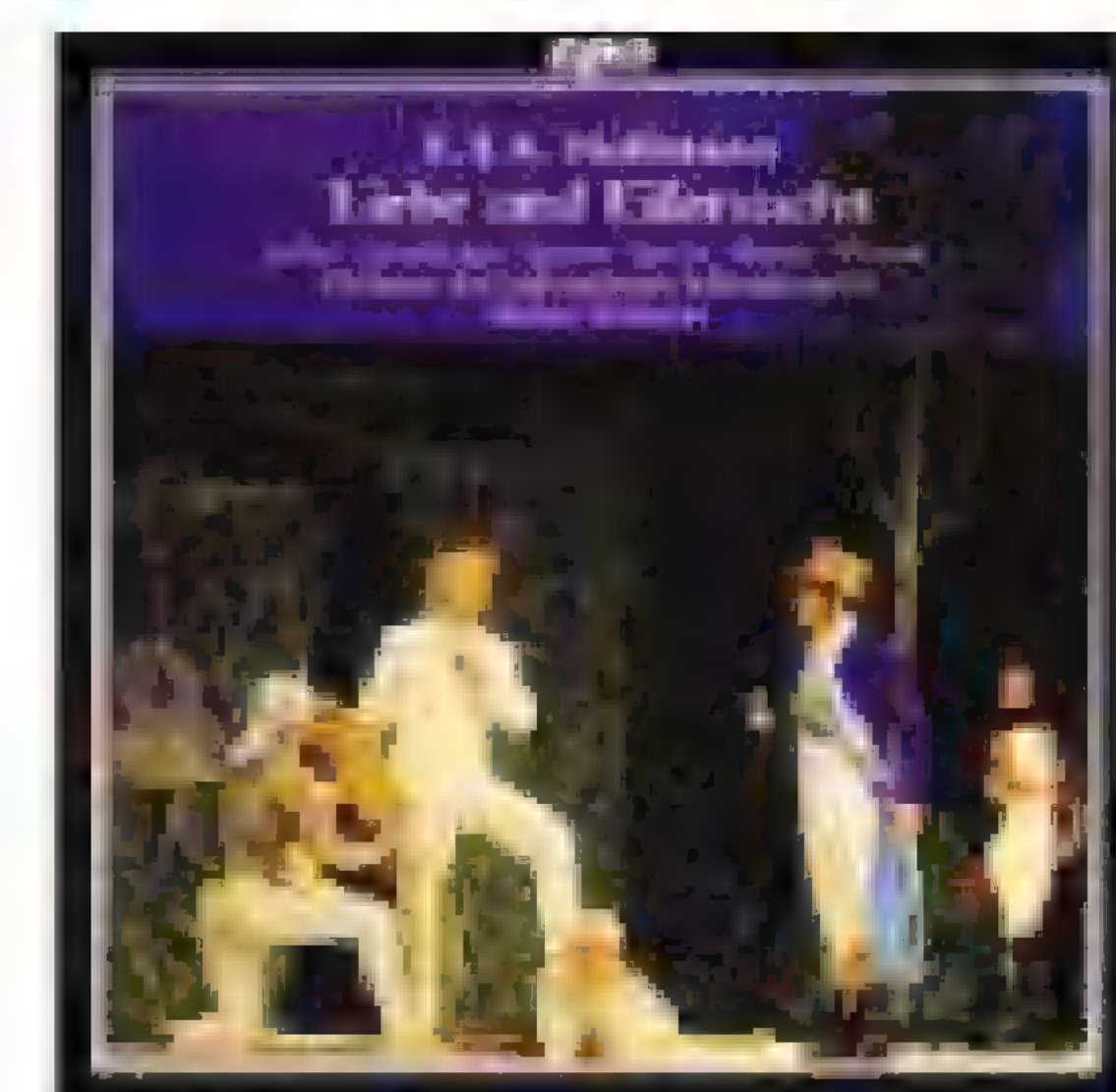
Liebe und Eifersucht

Gary Martin *bass* Count of Florence
Robert Sellier *ten* Enrico
Florian Simson *ten* Ottavio
Jörg Simon *bass* Fabio
Christina Gerstberger *sop* Lisida
Thérèse Wincent *sop* Cloris
Sybille Specht *mez* Nisa
Sybilla Duffe *sop* Celia
Stefan Sevenich *bass-bar* Ponlevi
Ludwigsberg Castle Festival Orchestra /
Michael Hofstetter

CPO     CPO777 435-2 (122' • DDD • S/T/U)

Recorded live 2008

Hoffmann's tale of love and
jealousy is a pleasing discovery



ETA Hoffmann was not just the author of fantastic tales and the central character of Offenbach's opera but also – besides much else – a talented composer.

His 1816 opera *Undine* has enjoyed occasional revival on German stages and has made it to CD. *Liebe und Eifersucht* ("Love and Jealousy") is an earlier work that was never performed in Hoffmann's lifetime. Only in 1999 was the score published, and only after the overture had been included in an earlier CPO collection of Hoffmann's music was the whole work first staged at the 2008 Ludwigsburg Festival in the performance preserved here.

Described as "Singspiel" (having dialogue and no chorus), its libretto is an adaptation by

Hoffmann himself of August Wilhelm Schlegel's German translation of Pedro Calderón de la Barca's play *La banda y la flor* ("The Sash and the Flower"). It's a typical operatic tale of yearning, wooing and rejection, complicated by disguise (three veiled ladies) and misunderstood tokens of affection (the sash and the flower), all prompting the jealousy of the title. The principal male characters are a Florentine Duke and his sidekick Enrico, the ladies a pair of sisters whose father is about to enter the Duke's service.

I soon gave up trying to unravel the obscurities of the booklet's synopsis and translation of the text. Nor does the Mozart-going-on-Lortzing score always move the action along with the pace it might. But there's a zippy and tuneful overture, and the set numbers have undoubted appeal – a couple of rhythmically inventive solos for Enrico, for instance, a finely pointed duet for his servant Ponlevi and the heroine's chambermaid Lisida, and a lightly comical duet for the Duke and Enrico. The outstanding performers are Robert Sellier as Enrico and Sybilla Duffe as the chambermaid, while the original-instrument orchestra convincingly captures the period atmosphere under Michael Hofstetter. This can certainly be recommended to anyone with a taste for unpretentious and undemanding operatic rarities of its era.

Andrew Lamb

Nebra

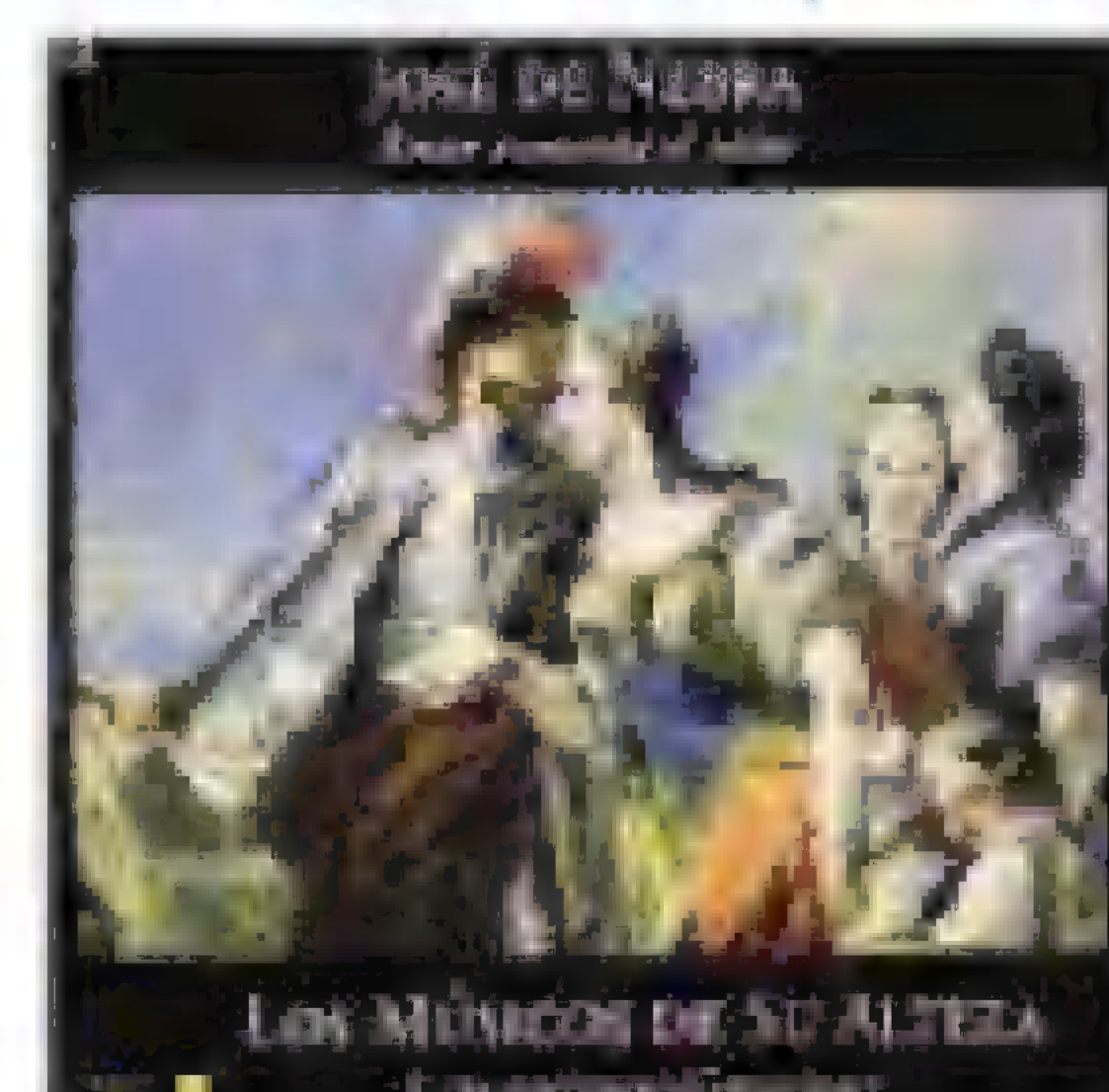
Amor aumenta el valor

Olalla Alemán *sop* Horacio
María Eugenia Boix *sop* Clelia
Marta Infante *mez* Porsena
Agnieszka Grzywacz *mez* Livio
Soledad Cardoso *sop* Porcia
Ana María Otxoa *sop* Calturnia
José Pizarro *ten* Mimo
Los Músicos de Su Alteza /

Luis Antonio González

Alpha   ALPHA171 (80' • DDD)

A single surviving act from a celebratory
work, entirely deserving of its revival



The Spaniards' zeal for investigating their musical theatre heritage is an enviable one. In recent years José de Nebra's score for *Amor aumenta el valor* ("Love Augments Valour") has been performed in concert around Spain by Emilio Moreno and El Concierto Español. Now it's recorded in a different realisation by the rival Baroque group of Luis Antonio González and Los Músicos de Su Alteza.

The work was part of the 1728 celebrations in Lisbon for twin engagements (by proxy) of the heirs apparent of Spain and Portugal to

the infantas of the two royal families. Its plot comes from Livy's *History of Rome* and tells of Horatius Cocles being taken from his loving Cloelia to defend Rome against the Etruscans. The full text of the work has survived, but only the score of the first act. That was the sum of Nebra's contribution, the other two acts being by two of the Italian composers who dominated Spanish Baroque music. The recording confirms that the single act is sufficiently self-contained to merit lone revival.

Maria Bayo included three numbers from the work in her 2003 collection of Baroque zarzuela arias with Les Talens Lyriques under Christophe Rousset (Naïve, 3/04), and there is singing there at times more refined than here. On the other hand, there's undoubtedly a greater sense of drama here. Porsena's "Más fácil sera al viento" especially gains an extra dimension as performed here by Marta Infante, and among numbers not recorded by Bayo is the stirring "Al arma, oculto generoso ardor", impressively sung by Agnieszka Grzywacz.

I have one quibble. We're told that from Calderón onwards the vocal parts in Spanish operas were sung by women, whereas here, "for the sake of variety, we have taken the liberty of giving the part of Mimo [Horace's servant] to a tenor". It's actually more of a jolt to have just one relatively minor role in seven taken by a male voice than to have female voices used throughout, as with El Concierto Español. Overall, though, this issue is well worth the attention of anyone drawn to Nebra and Spanish Baroque. **Andrew Lamb**

Rameau

Les paladins

Anna Virovlansky *sop* Argie
Iulia Elena Surdu *sop* Nérine
Laimonas Pautienius *bar* Orcan
Anders J Dahlin *ten* Atis/Démon
Adrian Sâmpetean *ten* Anselme
Thomas Michael Allen *ten* Manto/Paladin
Neue Düsseldorfer Hofmusik /
Konrad Junghänel

Coviello     COV21013 (121' • DDD)

Recorded live

No longer the young radical, Rameau
still satisfies in this late parody



Les paladins was composed towards the end of Rameau's life. It was not a success: premiered at the Paris Opéra in February 1760, it was taken off

after 15 performances and never revived. When Rameau made his operatic debut with *Hippolyte et Aricie* in 1733, he was considered in some quarters to be a radical who had betrayed the tradition laid down by the sainted Lully. He consolidated his position in the 1740s; but by the time of his death in 1764 he was viewed as distinctly



Dame Joan Sutherland's Bellini debut

Pure PLEASURE

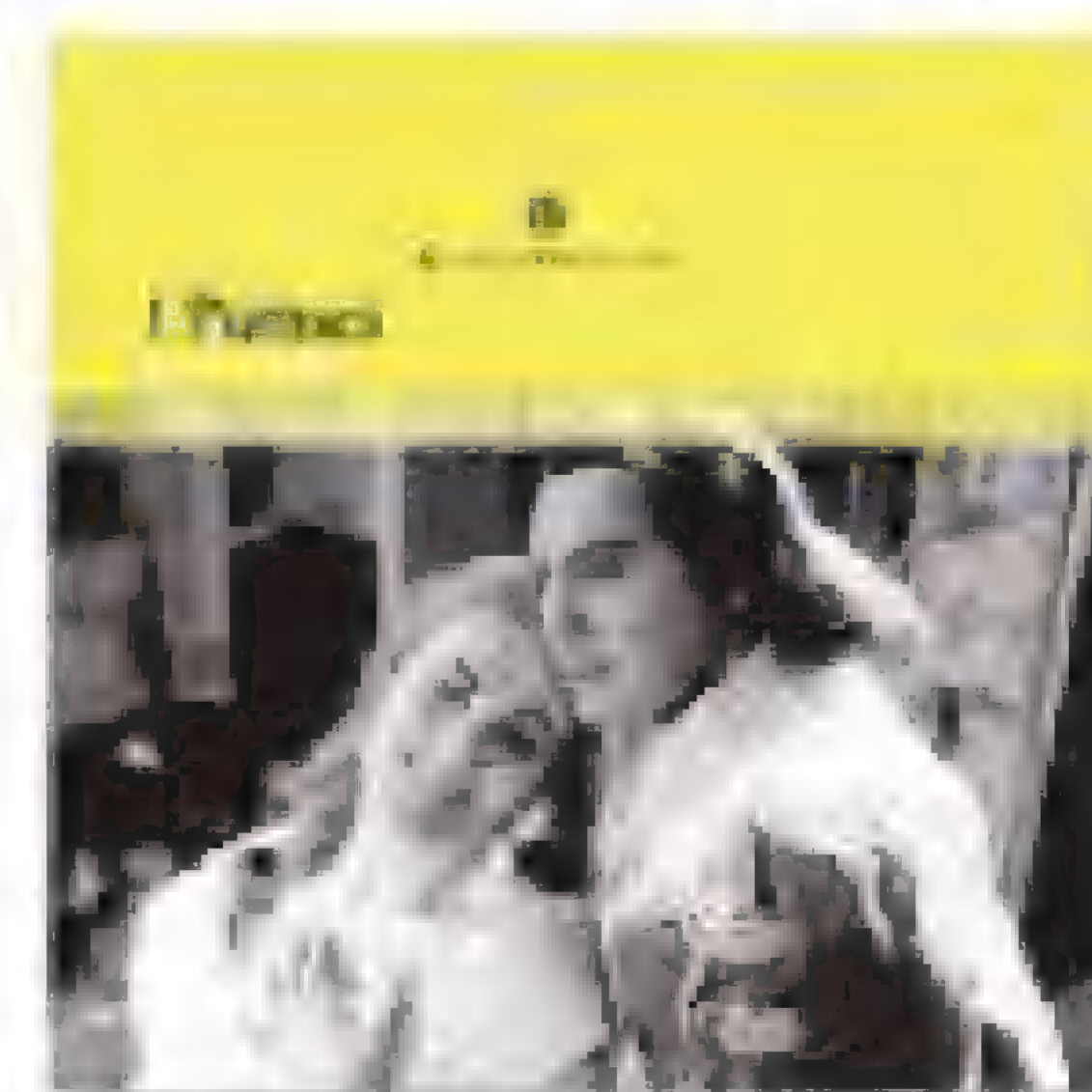
Bellini

I puritani

Joan Sutherland *sop* Elvira
Nicola Filacuridi *ten* Arturo
Ernest Blanc *bar* Riccardo
Giuseppe Modesti *bass* Giorgio
Monica Sinclair *contr* Enrichetta
David Ward *bass* Gualtiero
John Kentish *ten* Bruno
Glyndebourne Chorus; Royal Philharmonic
Orchestra / Vittorio Gui

Glyndebourne Festival Opera © ② GFOCD009-60
(134' • ADD • S/T/T)

Recorded live, June 5, 1960



This bounty from the archive would be welcome at any time but never more so than at the present.

Glyndebourne's production of *I puritani*

in 1960 marked the opera's first professional performance in England since 1887 and it was Joan Sutherland's first appearance in any opera by Bellini. A principal mover was the conductor, Vittorio Gui, who realised that in the newly triumphant Sutherland he would have a soprano potentially ideal for the role of the heroine, and although the musical establishment

was sniffy (and the press full of snide references to "canary-fanciers"), the musical public was eager to explore this long-neglected repertoire and disprove the complacently promulgated opinion that there were no singers nowadays who could cope with its demands.

This was a year after Sutherland's spectacular breakthrough (for the repertoire as well as herself) at Covent Garden with *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Her voice was at its freshest and there seemed no limit to the technical wonders she could perform. Although certain features of her style already threatened to become too pervasive (the downward *portamento* for pathos, for example), she was adaptably putting herself at the service of new roles, and manner had not developed into mannerism. Her Elvira is a living creation, and my feeling is that, in spite of the many fine qualities of the studio recordings (one from 1963, the other, with Pavarotti, 1975), I shall be turning to this version as first choice from now on. For one thing, it is good to hear the voice in stage-perspective; for another, I like the sound of the young voice best. Her first solo, the joyful polonaise in Act 1, is particularly magical. "Qui la voce" is already inflected at the expense of the melodic line, but less so than later, and the cabaletta is a dazzler.

She has worthy associates too. The tenor Nicola Filacuridi (whom I remember as a colourful Duke to Gobbi's Rigoletto at Covent Garden) is not quite of the kind one would think of in connection with this music, yet he is capable of grace as well as declamatory vigour, and, though singing an edited version which deletes the notorious high notes, he gives a convincingly virile account of the part. A notable pleasure is added by the idiomatic singing of Ernest Blanc, especially in his aria, a model of the *legato* style and well-rounded tone. Giuseppe Modesti (a bass misleadingly labelled tenor) is admirably even in his production and authoritative in character. Monica Sinclair, with tense dramatic concentration in her voice, makes the most of limited opportunities. David Ward and John Kentish have still smaller parts but are gratefully recognised.

Gui's direction is firm and unindulgent but the broad sweep of the ensembles works its spell. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Glyndebourne Chorus are as scrupulously tidy as if this were Mozart. As usual in the old Glyndebourne we begin by knowing ourselves to be in a box, but soon enough it becomes our very acceptable home for the evening – and, personally, I still miss it. **John Steane**

old-fashioned (the first of Gluck's "reform" operas, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, had appeared in 1762: adapted and expanded, it was staged in Paris 12 years later.)

Les paladins, a *comédie-lyrique* in three acts, was based on a fairy-tale by La Fontaine called "The dog that shook off money and gems", which in turn was derived from *Orlando furioso*, the epic poem by Ariosto. The plot anticipates elements of both *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Die Entführung*. Atis, a paladin – a knight errant – has been separated from Argie, who, with her maid Nérine, is confined by her guardian Anselme. Their gaoler is Orcan, Anselme's servant, who lusts after Nérine. Atis and his fellow paladins arrive to rescue Argie from Anselme, who wishes to marry her. They are assisted by Manto, a fairy of uncertain sex, and the lovers are reunited.

What the original spectators must have recognised, even if they didn't like it, was the element of parody and indeed self-parody in the score. This is lost on most audiences today, who rarely have the chance of seeing a Rameau opera on stage (come on, Glyndebourne!). For instance, Argie's "Triste séjour", with its mournful bassoons, turns out to be a parody of "Tristes apprêts" in *Castor et Pollux*; while Manto's "De ta gravité" could be straight out of *Platée*. More easily recognisable, perhaps, is the Italianate coloratura of Atis's airs, heroically sung by Anders Dahlin.

This "live" recording from Duisburg is satisfying in its way: the excellence of the period orchestra, especially, enables one to appreciate the delights of Rameau's instrumentation. To enjoy it as a drama, though, you need the brilliantly inventive production on DVD by Les Arts Florissants (Opus Arte, 4/06).

Richard Lawrence

Vivaldi

'Arie per tenore'

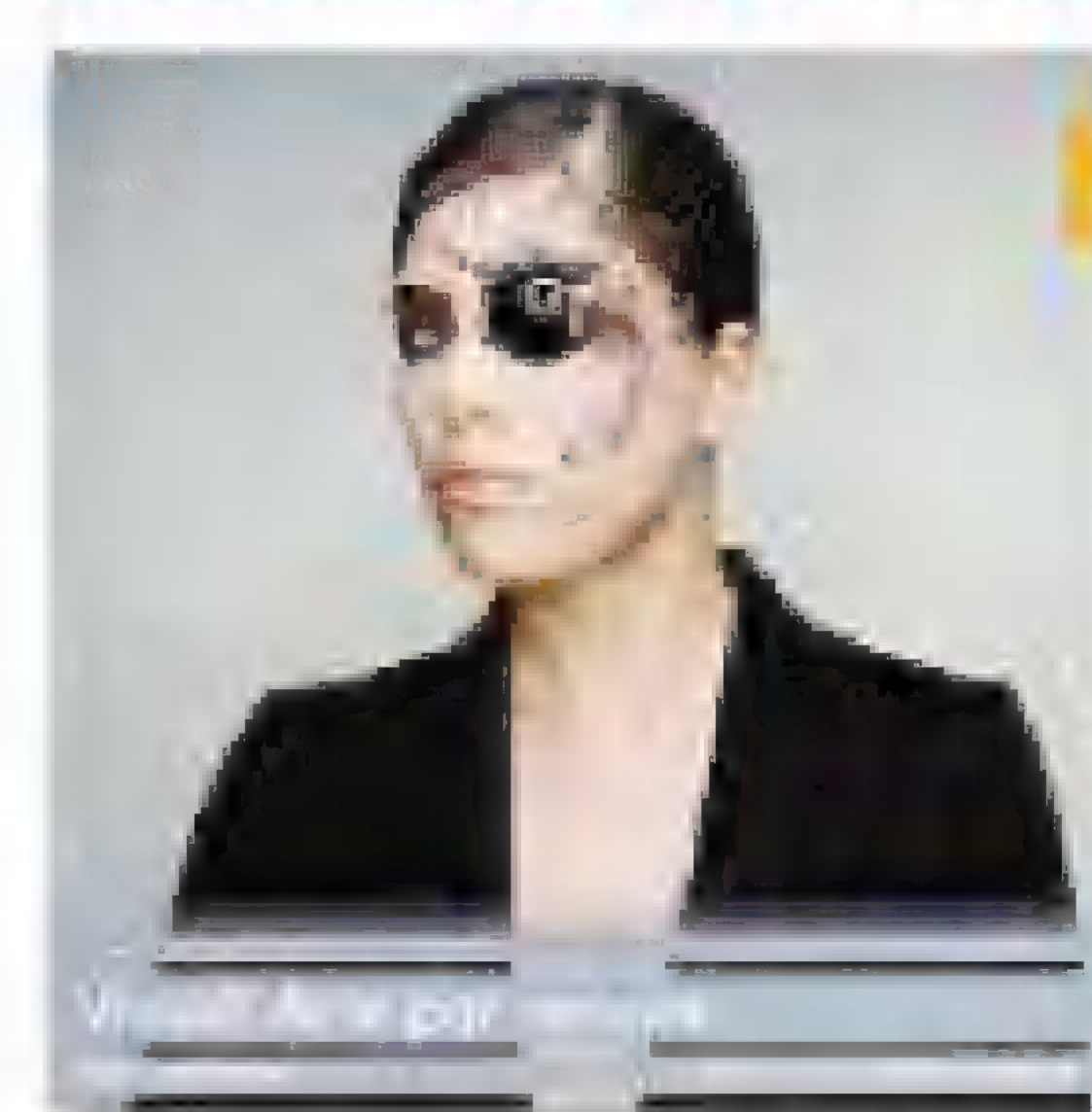
Arsilda, regina di Ponto – La tiranna avversa sorte (two versions); Va per selve e sol pien d'ira (first version); Va superbo quel vassallo.

Artabano, re de' Parti – Cada pur sul capo audace. **Bajazet** – Andiam Prence...A' suoi piedi Padre esangue. **La costanza trionfante** – Non sempre folgora. **Dorilla in Tempe** – Coro Gemiti e lagrime; Dell'aura al sussurrar. **Farnace** – Alle minacce di fiera belva. **L'incoronazione di Dario** – Col furor ch'in petto io serbo; Cessa tiranno amor; Fido amante frammento strumentale. **Tigrane** – Care pupille. **Tito Manlio** – La fatal sentenza; Il figlio, il reo; Già lasciò la nobil salma. **La verità in cimento** – Vinta a piè d'un dolce affetto (second version). Concerto ripieno, RV110

^aTopi Lehtipuu *ten* ^bChorus of Radiotelevisione Svizzera; I Barrochisti / Diego Fasolis

Naïve © OP30504 (64' • DDD)

Naïve's Vivaldi Edition maintains high standards with this tenor aria selection



Following Ian Bostridge's "Three Baroque Tenors" (EMI, 12/10), this recording could be entitled "Three Vivaldi Tenors". More than

three, actually, but the booklet-note concentrates on Annibale Pio Fabri, Antonio Barbieri and Giovanni Paita. Not all the arias here have a singer's name attached: however, the leader seems to be Fabri, who is one of the Bostridge trio.

Only one aria is on both discs, and that is "La tiranna avversa sorte" from *Arsilda*, where a prince vows to gain the throne that is rightfully his. On the Bostridge disc, the repeated notes in the strings are forceful, even spiky: here they are smooth but no less intense, a feature also of Topi Lehtipuu's singing. Vivaldi composed another setting of the same text, and that too is here: a forthright piece in the major, sung with appropriately heroic tone.

The third of the four excerpts from *Arsilda*, "Va per selve", was apparently discarded early on. It's a metaphor aria, a striking five-note ostinato representing an angry lion prowling through the forests. Lehtipuu conjures up the raging beast with gusto, and he is good at furious jealousy in another aria composed for Fabri, "Col furor" from *L'incoronazione di Dario*. In both arias, and elsewhere, the conductor indulges in an annoying trick of pausing before the last note of the final ritornello.

There are two choruses, both from *Dorilla in Tempe*: the first anticipates the Furies in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, the second – a charming surprise – is a reworking of "Spring" from *The Four Seasons*. Lehtipuu is an engaging singer, and this well-chosen programme does Vivaldi a great service.

Richard Lawrence

'Song for a City'

McCormick Advance Australia Fair

Offenbach Geneviève de Brabant – Gendarmes' Duet^a **Verdi** Rigoletto – Cortigiani, vil razza dannata^b; Un dì, se ben rammentomi...Bella figlia dell'amore^c. I Lombardi – Qui posa il fianco^d **Bellini** Norma – Dormono entrambi... Me chiami, o Norma?...Deh! con te, con te li prendi...Mira, o Norma...Sì, fino all'ore estreme^e **Anonymous** God save the Queen^c **Joan Sutherland** *sop* ^d**Margreta Elkins** *mez* ^e**Heather Begg** *contr* ^d**Graham Clark** *ten* ^b**Louis Quilico** *bar* ^{ad}**Clifford Grant**, ^a**Tom McDonnell** *basses*

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra /

Richard Bonyng

Decca Eloquence © 442 8644 (43' • ADD)

Recorded live at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, January 25, 1975

A unique night at Covent Garden as artists sing in aid of the Darwin cyclone



Devotees of Joan Sutherland will be delighted by the arrival on CD, however belated, of this unique vintage recording. "Song for a

City" is the live recording made in January 1975 by Decca engineers of the charity concert held at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in aid of victims of the disastrous cyclone that destroyed the town of Darwin in the Northern Territory of Australia. It was held at midnight after the main performances of the day, with all the singers giving their services, and with Prince Charles in attendance.

The most substantial item is the great duet from Act 2 of Bellini's *Norma* between Norma herself and Adalgisa. What will be a delight for Sutherland devotees is that the diva's voice was at its peak, when arguably the first of her two complete recordings of the opera came a little too early and her second, fine as it is, a little too late. Here her singing is glorious, and she is ably matched by her compatriot, Heather Begg, as Adalgisa. Each section of the duet is beautifully drawn, leading up to the final cabaletta which is nothing short of exhilarating.

Here and throughout the disc a live event adds to the intensity of singing and playing under Richard Bonyng, so that the quartet from *Rigoletto*, "Bella figlia dell'amore", with British tenor Graham Clark taking the role of the Duke on the very day of his Covent Garden debut, comes across with wonderful clarity. The ensemble builds up with such intensity that one experiences a gulp of emotion at the climax, such as one gets only in a live performance.

The other items are valuable too, with the celebrated Gendarmes' duet from Offenbach's *Geneviève de Brabant* hilariously done (in English) by Tom McDonnell and Clifford Grant, and Canadian baritone Louis Quilico, young and incisive, singing Rigoletto's condemnation of courtiers in "Cortigiani, vil razza dannata". The remaining item is valuable too, the rare trio from Act 3 of Verdi's *I Lombardi*, beautifully sung by Margreta Elkins, Graham Clark and Clifford Grant.

The disc may offer very short measure at only 43 minutes but few will be disappointed, particularly as the Decca sound is so vivid. It is worth noting that this invaluable disc has finally been issued thanks not to Decca in Britain but to Australian Eloquence.

Edward Greenfield

DVD & Blu-ray

Karajan on film • Domingo's Simon Boccanegra • Karita Mattila's Tosca

Beethoven

Piano Sonatas – No 2, Op 2 No 2^a;

No 15, 'Pastoral', Op 28^b.

Variations on an Original Theme, WoO80^c

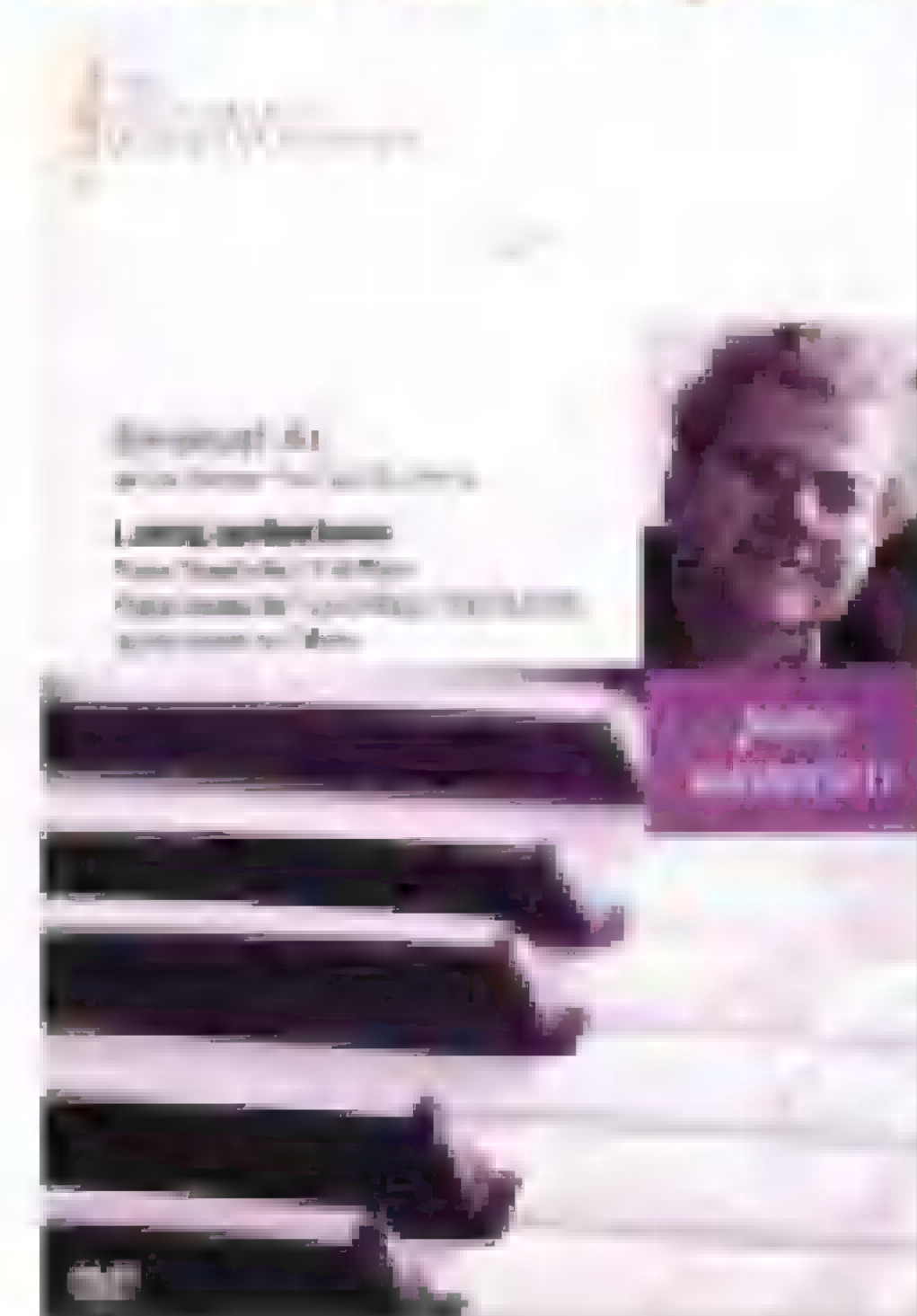
Emanuel Ax holding masterclasses with ^aSamson

Tsoy, ^bNicolas van Poucke, ^cClaire Huangci pfs

MMF ©  MMF2 031 (101' • NTSC • 16:9 • stereo • 0)

Recorded live at the Verbier Festival Academy

Emanuel Ax is a genial teacher as he takes three pianists through Beethoven



The Verbier Festival's Masterclass Media Foundation is a new venture that aims to create a unique archive of some of the world's greatest musicians filmed teaching or giving masterclasses. It is a non-

profit-making organisation that will make the archive available to music colleges and students throughout the world and, as the blurb informs us, "form a teaching resource of immense value for this and succeeding generations" – an admirable enterprise.

One could hardly wish for a more genial, insightful and sympathetic guide from the ranks of today's leading pianists than Emanuel Ax. The format of the no-frills production, eschewing any fancy titles, introductory sequence and even liner-notes, is simple: a student plays a couple of movements of a sonata without interruption; Ax, occasionally glimpsed following the score from his seat in the small auditorium, then comes onstage and works through with the pianist what we have just heard, offering suggestions, probing musical decisions and, not infrequently, praising the improvements he hears.

Criticisms? Even when following with a score, it is not always easy to identify to which particular bar or passage Ax is referring. Of the three fine young pianists (about whom, shamefully, we are told nothing), only Claire Huangci engages in any verbal dialogue with Ax. Are students trained to be mute in masterclasses?

While the DVD is basically a teaching aid, there is enormous pleasure in eavesdropping on what is essentially a private lesson and which, as a by-product, helps us realise what great imagination and insight it takes to be a world-class pianist. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Brahms

Ein deutsches Requiem, Op 45

Solveig Kringelborn sop Mariusz Kwiecien bar

Swedish Radio Choir; Rotterdam Philharmonic

Orchestra / Valery Gergiev

BIS ©  BIS-DVD1750

(79' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo • 0)

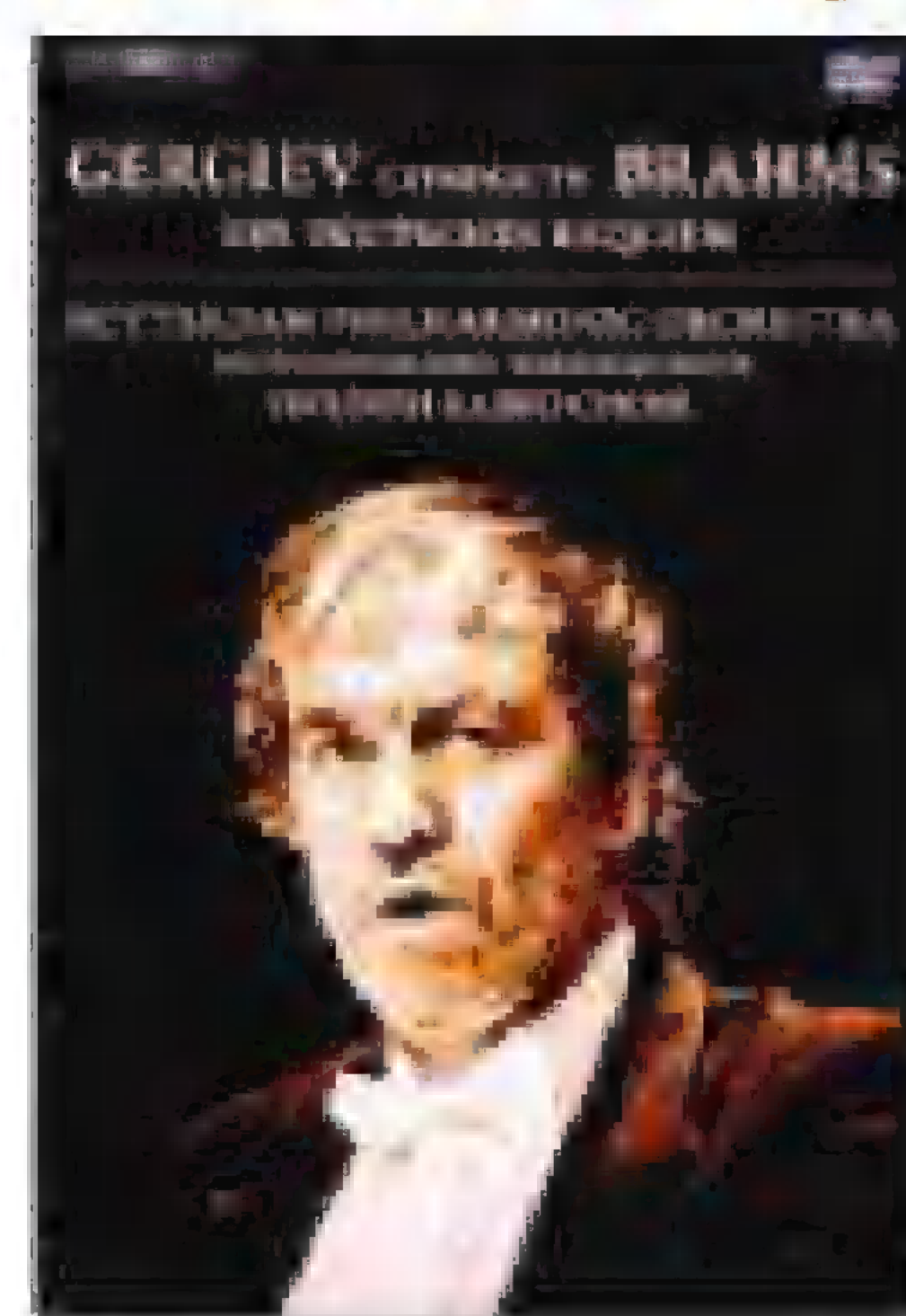
Recorded live at De Doelen Hall, Rotterdam,

May 25, 2008

Selected comparison:

Abbado (ARTH) 101 047

Gergiev directs a curiously disengaged Deutsches Requiem in Rotterdam



The dark wood of De Doelen Hall and the blond(e) highlights of the Swedish Radio Choir would grace any fine performance of the *German Requiem*, whether to watch or just to hear.

Both the acoustic and the choral singing offer the focused warmth that the Requiem needs if it isn't to sound inappropriately ecclesiastical or sterile. Valery Gergiev's presence may not prepare you for a physically and emotionally contained performance that shepherds us gently past intimations of mortality. If he conducted Tchaikovsky or Shostakovich with the same elegant disregard for the special points of tension and repose such as the pedal-point at the climax of the outer movements, his reputation would be quite different.

Whether you find his approach inward or simply muffled will be down to you. Let's call it muted, and puzzle over the disengagement of words from music. The baritone is as score-bound as Gergiev himself; the timpanist doesn't appear to be following either at the start of the third movement. The soft refreshing rain of the second movement's central section falls on barren soil; despite every word being clear, the choir might as well be la-la-la-ing for all the animation they can bring to a plodding accompaniment. The same goes for the fourth and fifth movements, where Gergiev rides majestically over the hemiolas that make the music drag and sing, that make it Brahms. In every way Abbado, the Vienna Philharmonic, the Musikverein, even the previous members of the Swedish Radio Choir are a preferable alternative on DVD, and that's to reckon without the

filming itself. A mike slants across Solveig Kringelborn throughout her solo, and rarely do we see a musician without a chair, a stand or a seat in the way. **Peter Quantrill**

Britten

Death in Venice

Marlin Miller *ten* Gustav von Aschenbach

Scott Hendricks *bar* Traveller/Elderly Fop/

..... Old Gondolier/Hotel Manager/Hotel Barber

Razek-François Bitar *counterten* ... Voice of Apollo

Alessandro Riga *dnr* Tadzio

Danilo Palmieri *dnr* Jaschiu

Stage director Pier Luigi Pizzi

Video director Davide Mancini

Chorus and Orchestra of La Fenice, Venice /

Bruno Bartoletti

Dynamic ©  33608

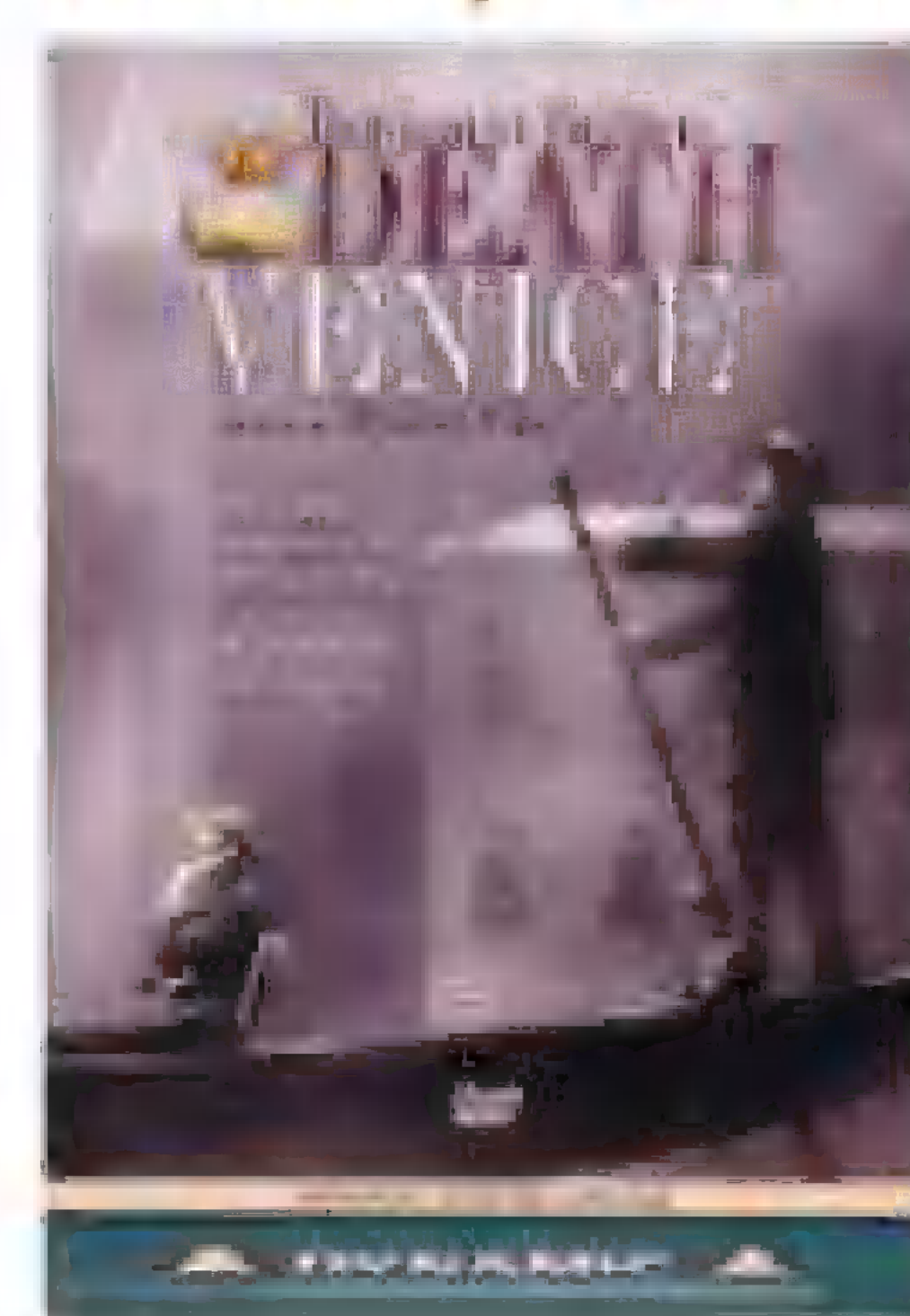
(155' • NTSC • 16:9 • LPCM 2.0 • 0)

Recorded live 2008

Selected comparison:

Tear, Glyndebourne, Jenkins (8/01) (ARTH) 100 172

An Italian Death in Venice that is an unparalleled visual treat



Even before the opera starts, the beauty of Venice takes hold. The opening credits are accompanied by film of Teatro La Fenice and the city's historic vistas, leading on perfectly to Pier Luigi Pizzi's visually

stunning production. Here is *Death in Venice* in high Visconti style, ravishingly designed in greys and silver blues, and inimitably Italian in the classical elegance of its settings. No other production of this opera has so successfully transported the audience through a series of fully conceived sets – starting out from a graveyard built of piles of books, along the Grand Canal, checking in to a black-and-white marble hotel, and then out on to the beach, where the games of Apollo take place under the gaze of the god's giant statue.

Does the magnificence of the production upstage the singers? Yes, a little, although the cast are well inside their roles. Marlin Miller sings with a refined lyrical sensibility that makes the most of Aschenbach's long stretches of limpid arioso and is alive to the poetry of the words. He also charts the character's decline vividly, but his younger-than-usual Aschenbach comes across as softer, and perhaps lesser in stature, than either Peter

Pears with his patrician hauteur or the rigorously unsentimental Robert Tear on Glyndebourne's rival DVD.

In the seven roles of his nemesis, Scott Hendricks sings toughly, bolstered by Pizzi's portrayal of this central relationship as a physical clench of opposites. As Britten intended, the role of Tazio is taken by a dancer, the dark and very Italian Alessandro Riga, who bristles with adolescent pride. Like most of the offstage sounds, Razek-François Bitar's Voice of Apollo is too distant and the small parts are not generally well taken. Though securing decent playing, the conductor, Bruno Bartoletti, could have given the music a stronger emotional pull, as Richard Hickox did (Chandos, 5/05). If this was a CD, the recording would not be first choice, but the beauty and grandeur of the production on DVD make it an exceptional treat. It is unlikely we will see another *Death in Venice* to rival this one visually for a long time. Highly recommended. **Richard Fairman**

Chopin

'The Warsaw Recital'

Barcarolle, Op 60. Berceuse, Op 57. Fantasia, Op 49. Mazurka No 7, Op 7 No 3. Nocturne No 8, Op 27 No 2. Piano Sonata No 2, Op 35. Polonaise No 6, 'Heroic', Op 53. Waltzes – No 3, Op 34 No 2; No 4, Op 34 No 3; No 6, 'Minute', Op 64 No 1; No 7, Op 64 No 2

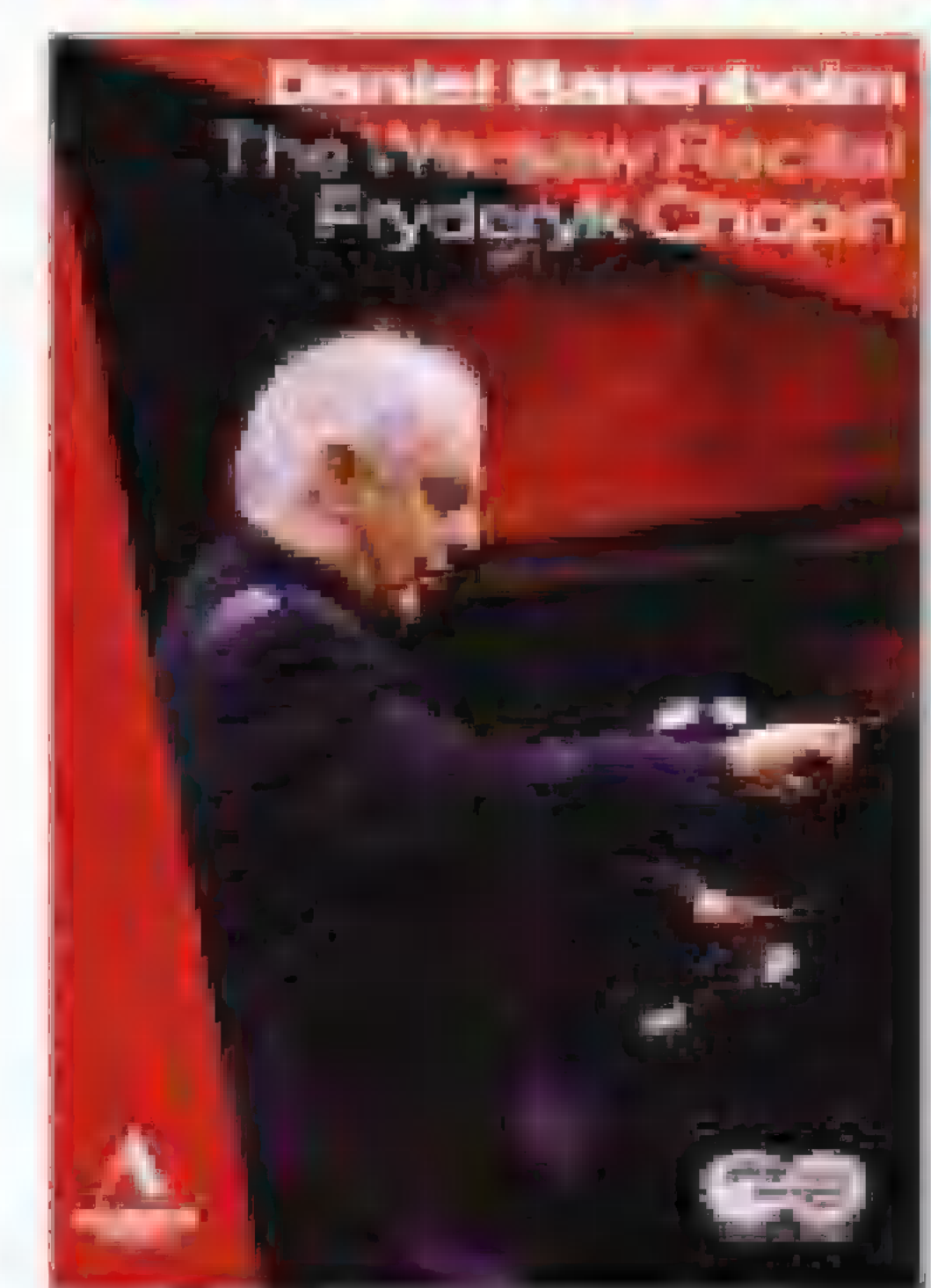
Daniel Barenboim *pf*

Accentus © **DVD** ACC20102

(91' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo & DTS 5.1 • 0)

Recorded live at the National Philharmonic Hall, Warsaw, February 28, 2010

Barenboim takes a cool approach to Poland's national composer



This great musician and ambassador for music celebrated in 2010 the diamond jubilee of his public debut. He has just signed a new record deal, maintains a hectic schedule conducting operas, orchestras and world premieres and still, somewhat miraculously, finds time to keep in fine pianistic trim. Not that this recital, a prestigious occasion given in the National Philharmonic Hall, Warsaw, on the eve of the 200th anniversary of Chopin's birth, is one of untrammelled joy.

I suppose it was only right that the programme should consist of some of the Polish national composer's best-known works, but the first half is notable for its conservative, even mundane, views of the Fantasia and "Funeral March" Sonata (the latter given without its first-movement repeat). The tempi are cautious, the emotions cool. Barenboim seems an almost diffident figure compared to the one conducting the

Berlin Philharmonic in an inspired performance of Brahms's First Symphony recently shown on television. By the second half, however, he has warmed to his task. The Barcarolle and sequence of three Waltzes are quite beguiling, the F major and C sharp minor works presented as touching short stories rather than athletic events (Op 64 No 2 reminded me of Rosenthal's magical 1929 recording). A change to the enharmonic major leads to the Berceuse for more drawing-room intimacy and, not before time, a change of temperature with a magnificent and genuinely impassioned account of the A flat major Polonaise.

The neat, unfussy direction makes the film a pleasure to watch. I can't say the same about reading the liner-notes, which alternate between the unfathomable and the pretentious.

Jeremy Nicholas

Dvořák • Janáček

Dvořák Symphony No 9, 'From the New World', B178 Op 95^a **Janáček** Glagolitic Mass^b

^bGabriela Beňačková *sop* ^bDrahomíra Drobnková *contr* ^bJozef Kundlák *ten* ^bSergej Kopčák *bass* ^bJan Hora *org* ^bPrague Philharmonic Choir; ^bCzech Philharmonic Orchestra; ^aGustav Mahler Youth Orchestra / Václav Neumann

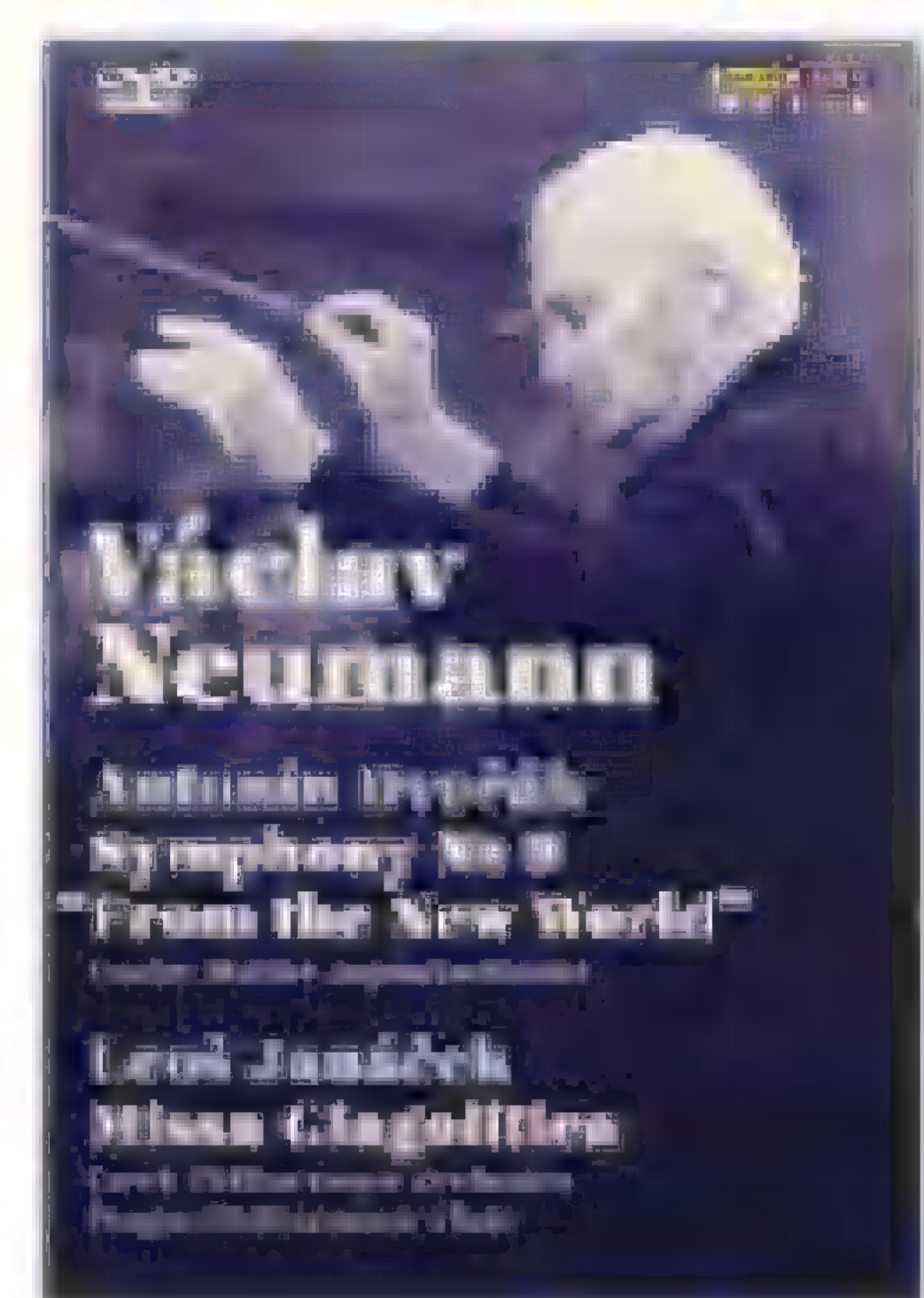
Arthaus Musik © **DVD** 101 535

(99' • NTSC • 4:3 • DTS 5.1 & PCM stereo • 0)

Recorded live at the ^bRudolfinum, Prague, 1987;

^aAlte Oper, Frankfurt, 1990

Neumann conducts a muted Mass and a no-holds-barred New World Symphony



Two very different Václav Neumanns are on offer here, and so are two very different sets of production values. The *Glagolitic Mass* was taped at Prague's handsome Rudolfinum (or "Dvořák Hall"), with good angle

shots of the chorus and head-on views of the generally excellent soloists. "This must be the Eighties," exclaimed my visiting daughters in unison, their prompt being Gabriela Beňačková's gladiatorial shoulder-pads. Too true – 1987, to be exact, and although the visual production is fairly good, the sound quality is a touch muted, even a little distorted at times, not at all what you need when Janáček's primary colours are firing off in heady profusion (and not what you expect to hear from the Rudolfinum). In other respects it's a worthy production. Neumann's direction of the Prague Philharmonic Choir and Czech Philharmonic Orchestra is patient, solid and sensitive to detail, especially in the *Sanctus*, but the score's defining quickfire alternations of mood and texture are sold significantly short. Even Jan Hora's organ solo, although well played, sounds comparatively cautious. So, only a qualified

DVD & Blu-ray reviews

success for the Mass. However, the 1990 *New World* Symphony that opens the DVD is something else again: different orchestra, different venue (the Alte Oper, Frankfurt), different world. For a start, the sound is far clearer and more dynamic than it was for the Prague concert and Neumann himself seems infinitely more engaged. He smiles, grimaces and gesticulates energetically at the climaxes, and, for the intimate close of the *Largo*, he even looks as if he's on the brink of tears.

Although comparatively weighty and broadly paced, it's very much a no-holds-barred sort of performance: strongly accented, with impressive keenness of attack in all departments (the timpanist has a whale of a time) and a plethora of intense facial expressions that suggests just how involved the players are. In other words, it's the sort of experience we've come to expect from the Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra, total commitment multiplied many times over. Happily the cameras capture it all with admirable clarity and a laudable sense of visual balance. I loved it and will be hanging on to the disc for its sake alone. **Rob Cowan**

Dvořák • Mozart

Dvořák Symphony No 9, 'From the New World', B178 Op 95^a **Mozart** Violin Concerto No 5, K219^b

^bYehudi Menuhin *vn* ^bVienna Symphony

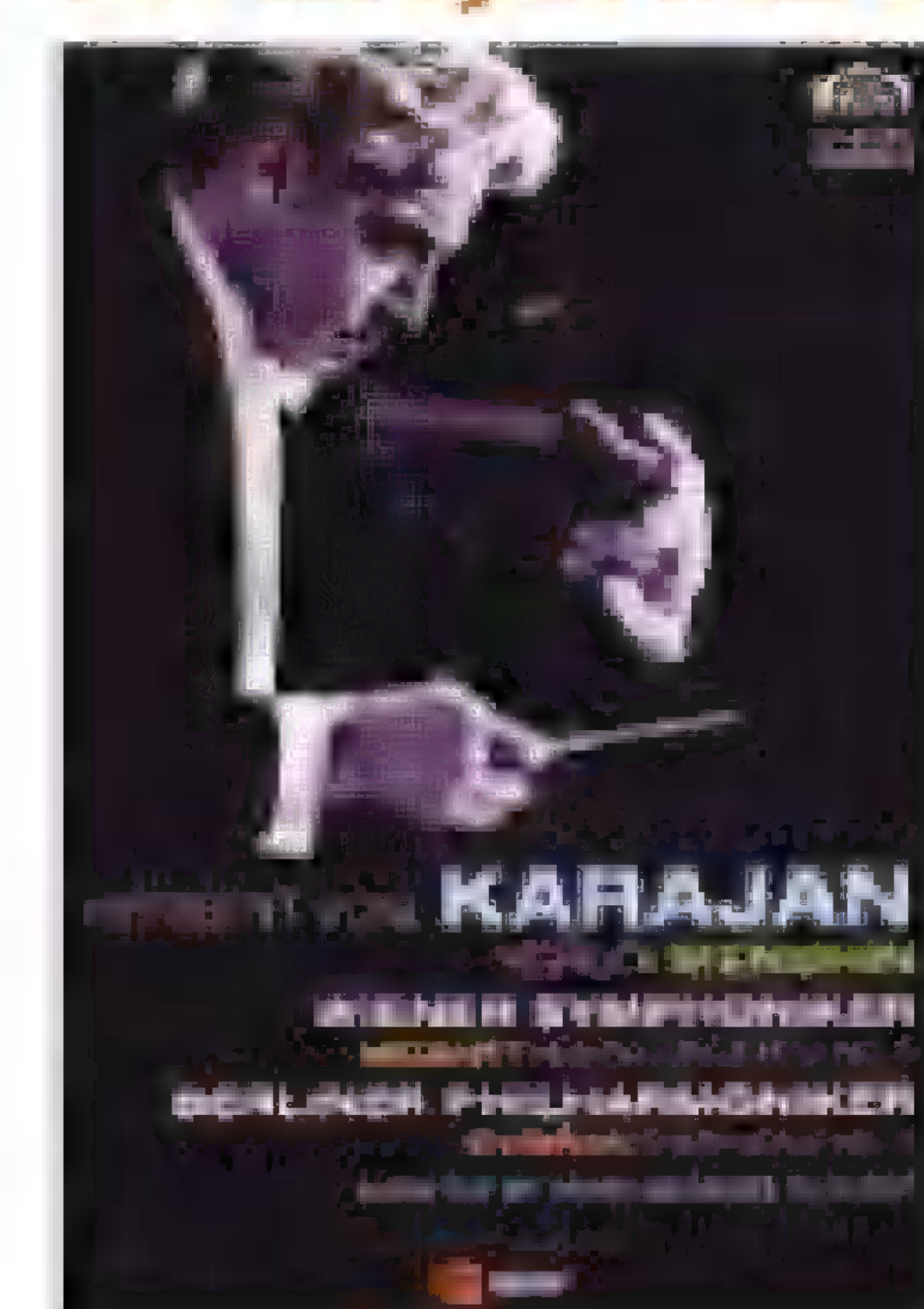
Orchestra; ^aBerlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Herbert von Karajan

Video director Henri-Georges Clouzot

C Major © **DVD** 704 008; © **BD** 704 104 (107' • NTSC • 1080p • 4:3 • PCM stereo & PCM mono • 0)

Recorded 1966. Bonuses include Herbert von Karajan in conversation with Yehudi Menuhin and Joachim Kaiser, and a previously unreleased rehearsal session for the Mozart concerto

A breakthrough in filmed performance as Karajan marches into a New World



The six-film collaboration between Karajan and French director Henri-Georges Clouzot in 1965-67 changed the way orchestral music was filmed for television. Glenn Gould, who relished the pair's "affront

to the conventions of the concert hall", particularly admired the Dvořák. It is indeed an electrifying performance by a rejuvenated Berlin Philharmonic at the peak of its powers; it is also a visually stunning record of a masterclass in virtuoso conducting.

The Mozart film was the first to be made and is the least characteristic, since Clouzot chose to shoot it not in a virtual studio space but in a candles-and-mirrors rococo salon. Mirrors suggest narcissism and there is something of that here. When Menuhin was

re-shown the film during the making of a Bruno Monsaingeon documentary, he expressed amusement at Karajan's affected demeanour, comparing his old friend to one of the beautiful Lipizzaner stallions in Vienna's Spanish Riding school. Of the six films, this was the one Karajan least liked.

The bonuses are interesting. There is a previously unseen sequence in which Karajan rehearses the strings (in English for some unexplained reason) in the opening of the Mozart's slow movement. There is also a filmed conversation between Menuhin and Karajan, the first part of which is embarrassingly stilted and mannered as Karajan, in faltering English, attempts to explore with a somewhat sycophantic Menuhin the relationship between sound and silence in the musician's age-old search for continuity of phrase (when Gould worked with Menuhin he scripted the conversation!). There are, however, nuggets to be mined, making this a useful addendum to the now legendary rehearsal film of Schumann's Fourth Symphony which Clouzot made with Karajan.

The German-language conversation with Joachim Kaiser about folk elements in the *New World* Symphony is a *tour de force*. This high-speed, high-octane conversation (and it really is a conversation) about the interface between folk music and the symphony ranges far beyond Dvořák, with a fascinating array of musical, historical and wider cultural references thrown in by both parties. People often ask what Karajan was like to talk to. Here is the answer. **Richard Osborne**

Mahler

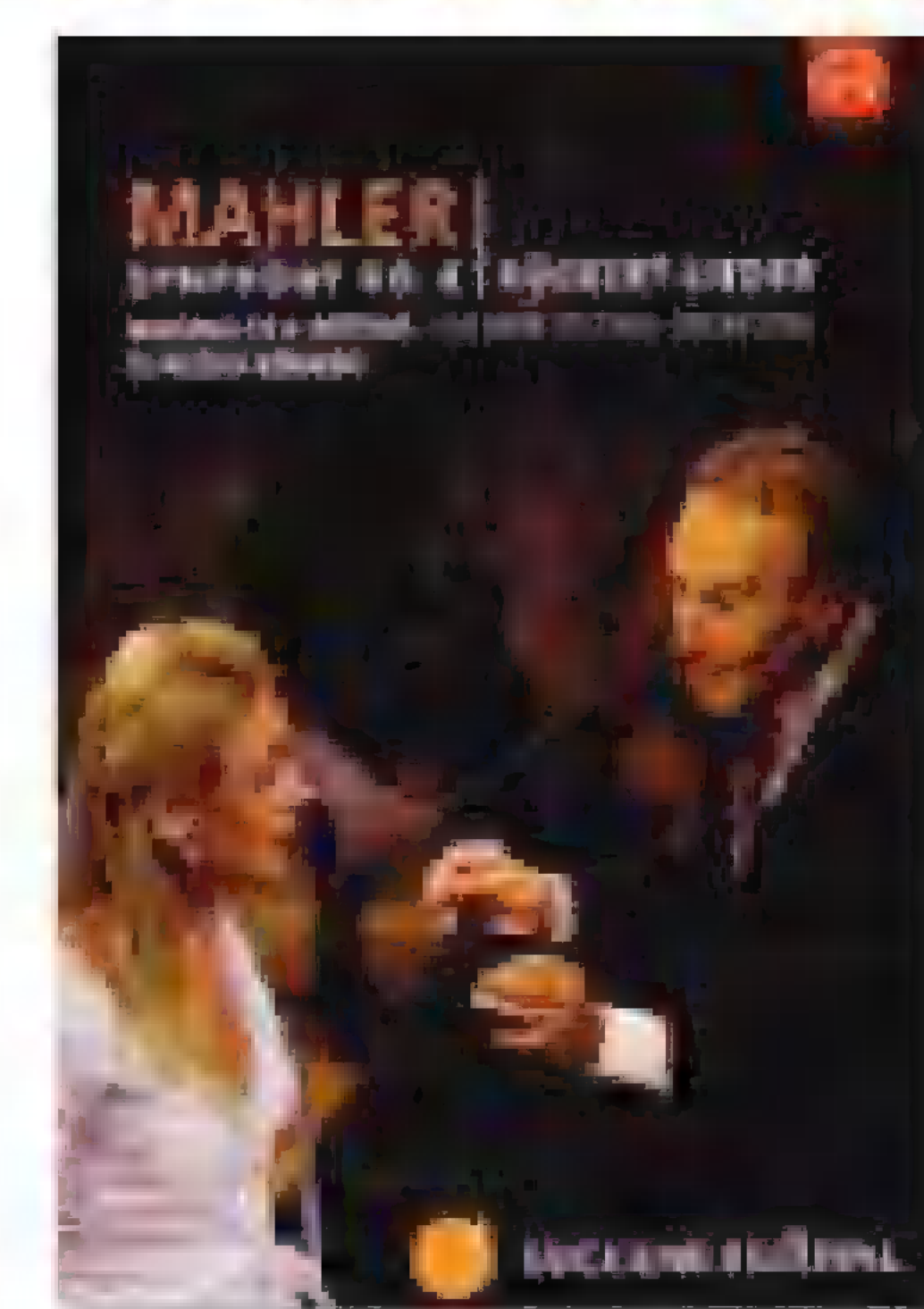
Symphony No 4. Rückert-Lieder

Magdalena Kožená *mez*

Lucerne Festival Orchestra / Claudio Abbado

EuroArts © 205 7988; © 205 7984 (88' • NTSC • 1080i • 16:9 • PCM stereo, DTS 5.1 & DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1 • 0). Recorded live, August 21-22, 2009

Abbado and the Lucerne Festival Orchestra are on sensational form



That Claudio Abbado should be ending his career delivering standard repertoire as super-refined chamber music to the well-heeled has unsettled some commentators but this is a glorious example of his latter-day music-making in a programme which suits the softer grain completely. You can scarcely imagine this unassuming maestro ripping his score to shreds as did Arturo Toscanini while rehearsing Wagner for the Lucerne Festival on the brink of the Second World War. The latter's scratch band was stuffed with luminaries including the members of the Busch Quartet; Abbado's 2009 line-up has the Gustav Mahler Chamber Orchestra at its core and is quite simply beyond

praise. There are innumerable incidental beauties from all sections: the woodwind nothing short of sublime, the brass tactfully reticent, the strings perhaps most remarkable of all with their radiant *pianissimos*. The conductor's previous audio recordings of the work for DG (6/78 with Frederica von Stade, 1/06 with Renée Fleming) are, for me at least, comprehensively outclassed. The mood is more relaxed and the contribution of Magdalena Kožená in the finale a definite plus. She may not be a natural for childlike wonder but she sings with consummate technical control and intellectual understanding.

If the *Rückert-Lieder* seem a little cool at first, the astonishing subtlety and tact of the orchestral response inspires Kožená to a rapt account of "Ich bin der Welt", perhaps the finest since Janet Baker and John Barbirolli famously collaborated in these songs (EMI, 2/68). The fact that the soloist is sometimes marginally ahead of musicians whose every phrase is shaped to jewel-like perfection only goes to show that these renditions are pretty much "as heard" in the hall.

Visually things are less happy. The filming is conventional in style but old Abbado hands could be distressed by his extreme frailty. Meanwhile Kožená's tanned face and pink décolletage seem ill-matched and you may take against against her wild-eyed gurning, something I hadn't noticed before in live performances witnessed from the cheaper seats. You can always turn off the visuals although, usefully, subtitles are provided. Sonically it is just a little dry, possibly a faithful reflection of the much-lauded sound in the venue.

Abbado's ability to create a frisson at the outset of the *Adagietto* of the Fifth is trumped here by the instantaneous rapture he magics at the start of the Fourth's slow movement. Sceptics should sample without delay. Here is profoundly affecting artistry which for once lives up to the hype. **David Gutman**

Massenet

Werther

Jonas Kaufmann *ten* Werther

Sophie Koch *mez* Charlotte

Ludovic Tézier *bar* Albert

Anne-Catherine Gillet *sop* Sophie

Alain Vernhes *bass* Magistrate

Andreas Jäggi *ten* Schmidt

Christian Tréguier *bass-bar* Johann

Alexandre Duhamel *bar* Brühlmann

Olivia Doray *sop* Käthchen

Children's Choir of the Opéra National,

Paris; Maîtrise de Jauts-de-Seine; Orchestra

of the Opéra National, Paris / Michel Plasson

Stage director Benoît Jacquot

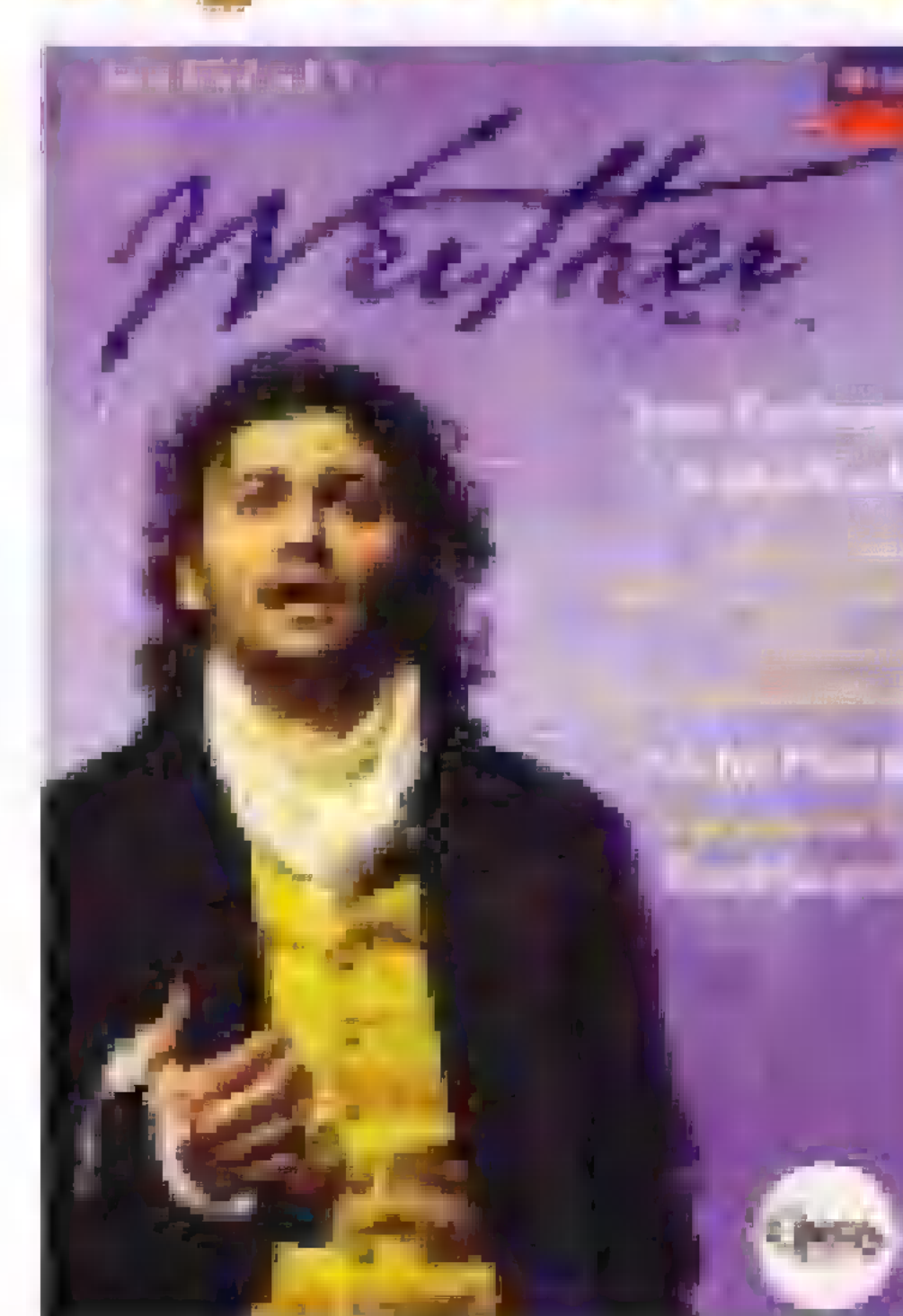
Video directors Benoît Jacquot, Louise Narboni

Decca © 074 3406DX2 (162' • NTSC • 16:9 •

LPCM stereo and DTS 5.0 • 0)

Recorded live, January 2010

Jonas Kaufmann is a true Werther original but deserves a better setting



It is the old, modern story: a good musical performance and bad stage production. The trouble is that this is a DVD, so the visual element is of particular importance. Briefly, most of the opera is played *in tenebris*. The

set for Act 1 is in fact quite visible enough: one does not want to see more because it is unsightly. There is a piece of fine irony when Werther enters, expressing his enchantment with the place and exclaiming that it embodies all the beauties of nature. There is, of course, hardly anything of nature in view. Act 2 should, I seem to recollect, depict a small town on a Sunday morning, with church, pub and other items typical of a semi-rural setting. This has become a barren, windswept stage under a sullen, unchanging sky.

Acts 3 and 4 are too dark for one to be very sure of anything, and I suppose it may be said that Werther's haggard expression and bloodstained shirt are made clear enough and that they are what matter most. Occasionally there is an effect of light beautifully irradiating the face of Charlotte or Sophie. The movement of characters is not happily managed and the treatment of the tipsy Bacchus-idolaters is heavy-handed. No, I don't like any of it.

Kaufmann's singing, on the other hand, is rich and often extremely beautiful. Sophie Koch, a few uneven phrases notwithstanding, is a touching and dignified Charlotte. The Sophie and Albert, Anne-Catherine Gillet and Ludovic Tézier, are uncommonly good singers, the latter a cypher as to character, the former natural and charming. I don't altogether admire Michel Plasson's conducting (too much is allowed to drag, which with this production is the last thing wanted), but the playing is thoughtful and intense, and every care is taken over detail. In particular, Kaufmann's work is sufficiently remarkable for it to deserve (like his *Lobengrin*) in the near future a more worthy setting. **John Steane**

Puccini

Tosca

Karita Mattila *sop* Tosca

Marcelo Álvarez *ten* Cavaradossi

George Gagnidze *bar* Scarpia

David Pittsinger *bass-bar* Angelotti

Joel Sorensen *ten* Spoletta

Paul Plishka *bass* Sacristan

James Courtney *bass* Sciarrone

Keith Miller *bass-bar* Jailer

Jonathan Makepeace *treb* Shepherd Boy

Chorus and Orchestra of the Metropolitan

Opera, New York / Joseph Colaneri

Stage director Luc Bondy

Video director Gary Halvorson





Domingo's triumphant Covent Garden Boccanegra

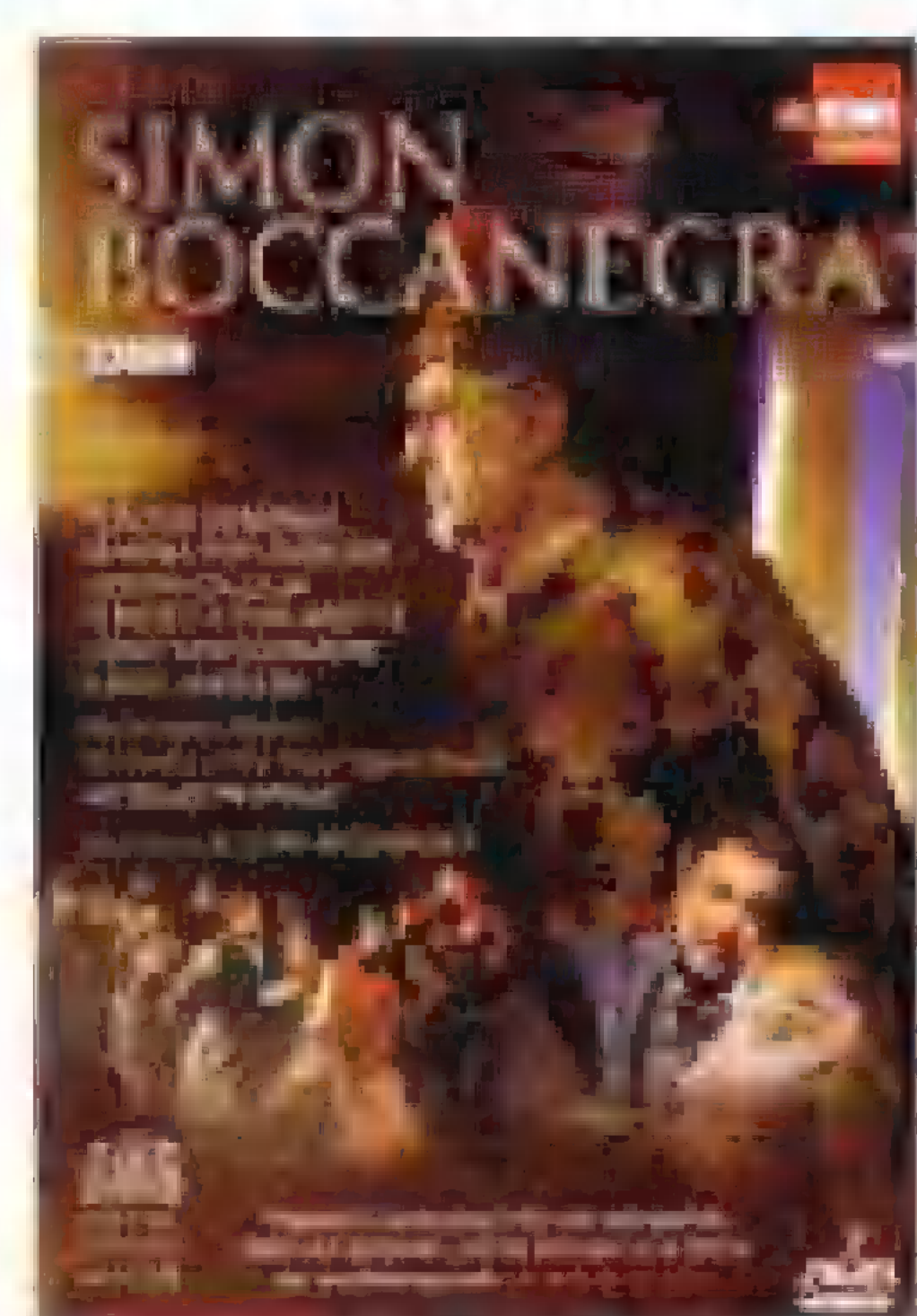
Who let the DOGE OUT?

Verdi

Simon Boccanegra

Plácido Domingo *bar*.....Simon Boccanegra
 Marina Poplavskaya *sop*.....Amelia
 Joseph Calleja *ten*.....Gabriele
 Ferruccio Furlanetto *bass*.....Fiesco
 Jonathan Summers *bass*.....Paolo
 Lukas Jakobski *bar*.....Pietro
 Lee Hickenbottom *ten*.....Captain
 Louise Armit *mez*.....Maid
 Chorus and Orchestr of the Royal Opera
 House, Covent Garden / Antonio Pappano
 Stage director Elijah Moshinsky
 Film director Sue Judd

EMI Classics © ② DVD 917825-9 (171' • NTSC • 16:9 •
 LPCM stereo and 5.1 • 0). Recorded live, July 2010



Like the Chilean tenor Ramón Vinay, Plácido Domingo has spread his repertoire from the weightier Italian roles – Verdi, Puccini, *verismo* – to 19th-century France (Bizet, Gounod, Saint-Saëns, Offenbach),

Russia (Tchaikovsky) and Wagner (Siegfried, Tristan, Parsifal, Lohengrin). He has, also like his predecessor, entered the baritone *Fach* with a recording of Rossini's Figaro, a TV film of *Rigoletto* and – in Berlin, Milan, New York, London and Madrid – Boccanegra onstage, a role with which he once talked of ending his career.

We should cut to the chase. Domingo (as stage director Elijah Moshinsky comments in one of the release's supporting interviews) does not sing Simon Boccanegra as a tenor, or as a baritone, but as Plácido Domingo. No vocal Tarnhelm has suddenly magicked a different-sounding timbre for this voice: here is, simply, Domingo singing – and evidently enjoying singing – a part that's lower down. You may argue that this undersells, or even traduces, the two great no-tenors-allowed confrontations of this opera – the duets with Fiesco (Ferruccio Furlanetto) in the Prologue and Act 3 – but Domingo's age and experience make up a little for the loss of lower sonorities. And the bigger difference in the voices here permits a greater antagonism of the

characters and clarity of text. Elsewhere, the statesman in Domingo's character makes much of the Council Chamber scene. That, and Verdi's enjoyment of a newer, more pungent brass style, look forward even more than usual to *Otello*.

What we might here cheekily call the supporting cast are strong – Furlanetto and Calleja's Adorno moving and Summers (a Boccanegra himself) experienced and wily as the Doge's adversary Paolo. Poplavskaya – seemingly everywhere now in bigger Verdis – tends to frown a lot but has the height and stature of both figure and voice. The present DVD release, directed by Sue Judd for the BBC and speedily assembled from three Covent Garden performances last July, does not have to be Beckmesser-marked up in a comparative list of small-screen *Boccanegras*. It may be best viewed as a tribute to a singer's achievement; a focus that should be shared here with the Royal Opera's music director and his orchestra and chorus, the epitome of style and polish in this repertoire.

Mike Ashman

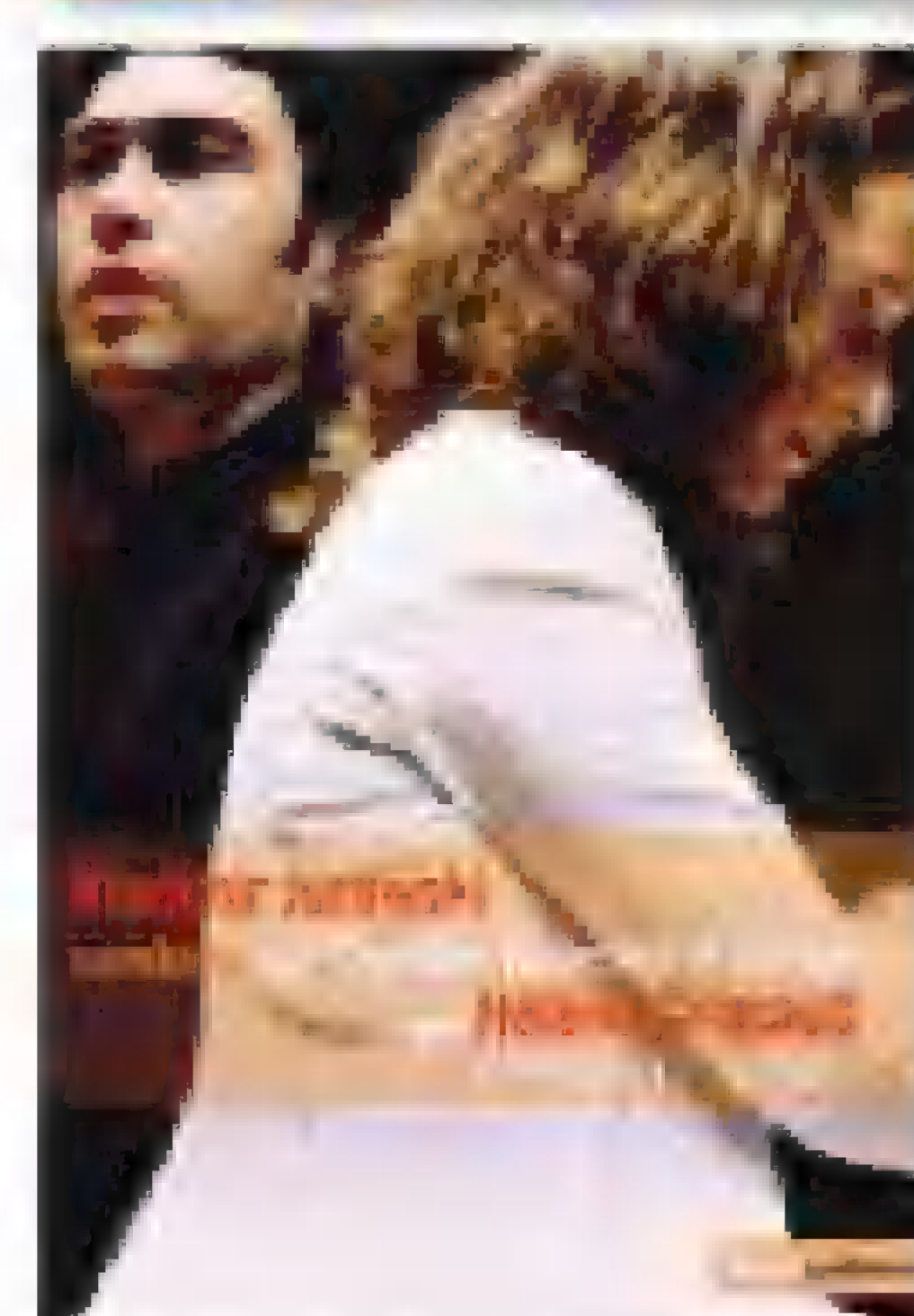


'Nobel Prize Concert 2009'

Chopin Mazurka No 15, Op 24 No 2^b
Prokofiev Romeo and Juliet – Suites
 Nos 1 & 2^a **Ravel** Piano Concerto in G^{ab}
Shostakovich Festive Overture, Op 96^a
^bMartha Argerich *pf* ^aRoyal Stockholm
 Philharmonic Orchestra / Yuri Temirkanov
Video director Michael Beyer
 EuroArts © **DVD** 205 7898 (79' • NTSC • 16.9 • PCM
 stereo & DTS 5.1 • 0)
 Recorded live, December 2009

Ravel • R Strauss

Ravel Piano Concerto in G^a
R Strauss Metamorphosen. Le bourgeois
 gentilhomme, Op 60
^aHélène Grimaud *pf*
 Chamber Orchestra of Europe /
 Vladimir Jurowski
Video director Louise Narboni
 EuroArts/Idéale Audience © **DVD** 307 8738;
 © **BD** 307 8734 (81' • NTSC • 1080i • 16.9 •
 PCM stereo & DTS 5.1 • 0)
 Recorded live at the Cité de la Musique, Paris,
 January 24, 2009
 The annual Nobel Prize Concert in
 Stockholm is held as a tribute to the year's
 Nobel Laureates. This live recording of the
 December 2009 concert opens with the
 Swedish national anthem, one of those off-
 the-peg tunes which no one can remember
 and most Swedes can't sing (if this audience



is anything to go by). Temirkanov then gets things going with a breezy account of Shostakovich's cheerily derivative *Festive Overture*. After the interval he conducts a selection from Prokofiev's two *Romeo and Juliet* suites, bizarrely ordered to commence with "Montagues and Capulets", proceeding to "Romeo at Juliet's Grave" and ending with the "Death of Tybalt".


The Stockholm players respond magnificently, as they do throughout.

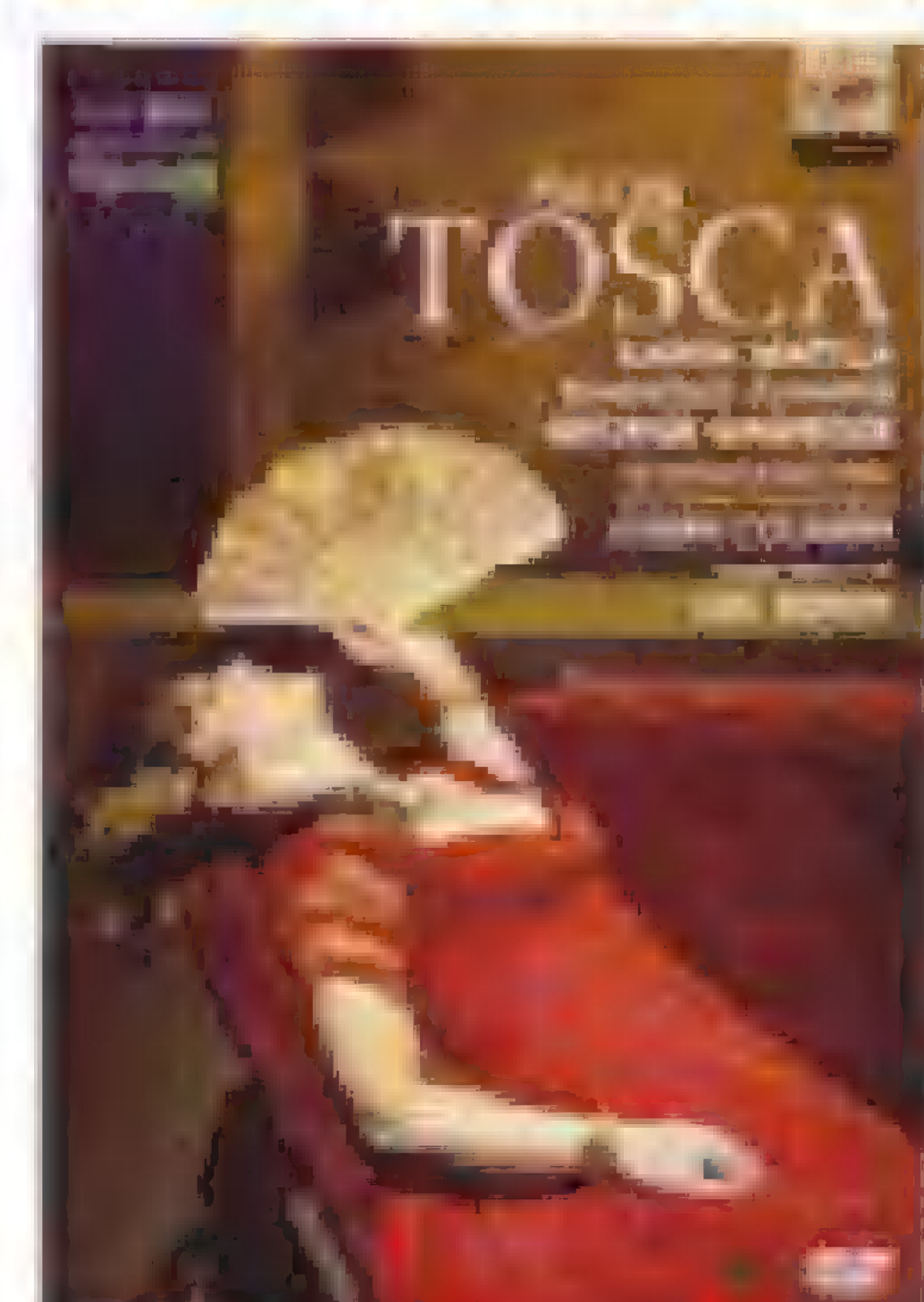
Before this comes the concert's highlight. Pianophiles will swoop on this opportunity to see and hear Martha Argerich in one of her specialities – Ravel's G major Concerto. She is on top form, propelling the music forwards in the outer movements with scintillating rhythmic élan, precision and wit, finding a new expressive depth in her second movement solo, and matched by spirited and sensitive woodwind and brass soloists. Michael Beyer's direction manages to illuminate Ravel's kaleidoscopic orchestration without distracting from the performance itself.

EuroArts' timing of 6'56" for the last movement, incidentally, is incorrect: it is 3'47". The extra three minutes are audience applause, which Argerich acknowledges with a charming little Chopin Mazurka.

The Ravel is common to both discs, as are the booklet-notes on the work. Hélène Grimaud's take on it is more matter-of-fact and almost mechanical. While she is Argerich's equal in dexterity, her more glacial tone, most noticeable in the slow-movement solo, ultimately fails to engage in the same way. Nor is director Louise Narboni's photography as crisply focused or choice of shots as adept as Beyer's – a long view just at the point when a close-up of Grimaud is needed, for example, a pointless cut away to Jurowski during Grimaud's solo and, most infuriatingly, during the first down-beat of *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*. Jurowski conjures up some fine playing in this, encouraging his section leaders to play up the humour of the score ("Das Diner", for instance), but the best of the disc is the opening work, an impassioned, heartfelt account of Strauss's *Metamorphosen*, his "study for 23 solo strings" composed in 1946. Phrases are lovingly sculpted, individual lines translucent, with Jurowski firmly in control of the work's arc. The ending is magically handled and truly affecting.

Jeremy Nicholas

Virgin ©  641739-5 (137 • NTSC • 16:9 • LPCM stereo & DTS 5.1 • 0)
Recorded live 2009
Bonus feature: 'Backstage with Susan Graham'
New York's new Tosca, stripped of Zeffirelli's visual comforts



Twenty-five years of Zeffirelli ("Who?" asks Luc Bondy, interviewed by Susan Graham) has accustomed New Yorkers to what they must have come to regard as the definitive *Tosca*. As with their counterparts at

Covent Garden, initially, at any rate, they felt a sense of loss. One realises how rich Zeffirelli was in visual comforts. The church of this new Act 1 is a mean brick edifice, the dignitaries arrayed in lavish splendour for the last five minutes, but no ritual procession, very little sense of occasion. Zeffirelli provided Scarpia in Act 2 with a fire, a really cheerful blaze, and a decent supper. Here he has a few things laid out informally amid the great chilly spaces of his apartment, with only his three supernumerary floozies to keep him warm in the opening pages. Act 3 is played in almost total darkness throughout.



And the warmth here comes from the music, and especially from the voices of the lovers. Karita Mattila is surely made for Tosca. The vocal character is ideal: round, rich, full-bodied in the upper regions, generous and combative in the lower. She softens well and is scrupulously broad in phrasing. Perhaps she milks the "Vissi d'arte" too industriously, and perhaps Álvarez is too anxious in his determination to catch the last drops in both of his arias, but no doubt the effect would be different in a (relatively) remote seat in the house. The Scarpia, George Gagnidze, was new to me but I don't expect to forget him. It is a fine, resonant voice and he makes the most of the lyricism in his part. His is also a singer's face, broadening around the cheek bones and, as it happens, particularly apt in this context for the man of power, with his crude appetites and brute determination.

Minor characters, such as his creepy henchmen, Spoletta and Sciarrone, are vivid, and the Met lives up to its tradition of bringing back a star from the past in a character-role, here Paul Plishka as the Sacristan. Joseph Colaneri conducts in a way that leaves nothing unobserved, sometimes making us a little too aware of his attentiveness. **John Steane**

R Strauss

Elektra

Linda Watson *sop.*..... Elektra
Jane Henschel *mez.*..... Klytemnestra
Manuela Uhl *sop.*..... Chrysothemis
René Kollo *ten.*..... Aegisth
Albert Dohmen *bar.*..... Orest

Vienna Philharmonic Choir; Munich Philharmonic Orchestra / Christian Thielemann
Stage director Herbert Wernicke
Video director Andreas Morell
Opus Arte ©  OA1046D; ©  OABD7082D (126' • NTSC • 1080i • 16:9 • LPCM 2.0 and DTS 5.1 • 0 • N/s)
Recorded live at the Festspielhaus, Baden-Baden, January 29 and February 1 and 4, 2010

Thielemann's orchestra upstages but never overwhelms the singers



The outstanding performance here comes from the pit. True to form, Christian Thielemann sees *Elektra* as a vantage-point for looking back over 19th-century Romanticism rather

than forward to modern Expressionism. The orchestral sound he favours is founded on a luxurious tapestry of strings, overlaid by a massive onslaught of the brass at climaxes, and the whole grand conception is very well realised by the Munich Philharmonic. From time to time the pacing feels too laid back – Elektra's scrabbling for the axe of vengeance is short on nervous energy – but otherwise this is a majestic performance that rises to heights of grandiloquence. Thanks either to Thielemann himself or the recording engineers, the singers have no trouble making themselves heard.

Productions of *Elektra* tend to be either indulgent displays of post-Freudian excess or stark and plain. Herbert Wernicke's staging at Baden-Baden, dominated by a sliding black wall that opens up occasional gashes of light, belongs in category two. There is nothing controversial here, just a straightforward retelling of the myth that puts the singers centre stage. The clean lines and bold splashes of colour come across with striking clarity in this high-quality film.

Even in close-up, Linda Watson looks fully inside the character of Elektra. She starts the evening in rather wobbly voice, excusable in the face of such a taxing evening, and though she settles down later, neither steadiness nor intonation is ever quite ideal. Her strength is the all-embracing commitment she brings to her portrayal. Manuela Uhl's voice is a touch too bright and thin at the top to qualify as the ideal Strauss lyric soprano but her defensive Chrysothemis suggests well the introverted younger sister. As Klytemnestra, Jane Henschel makes a grand entrance in regal red, apparently swathed in the Royal Opera House curtains, and offers impressive singing on a big range from surefire power to half-whispered intimacy. Albert Dohmen is the businesslike Orest and René Kollo puts in a star cameo as Aegisth. In the absence of competition from the great singers of the past at their peak, this well-produced DVD will do nicely. **Richard Fairman**



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Released in November 2010

American Icons



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A tale of three maestros

Knappertsbusch, Barbirolli and Toscanini

If ever there were a conductor whose work often confounded expectations, it was the German conductor **Hans Knappertsbusch**. Commonly daubed a Teutonic slow-coach, "Kna" (as he was known) proves to have been anything but a slouch, especially in that popular haven for slouches of the baton, Anton Bruckner. Audite's five-disc collection of "The Complete RIAS Recordings" includes Knappertsbusch's Berlin Philharmonic versions of Bruckner's Eighth (1951) and Ninth (1950) symphonies, the latter presented in two versions, just days apart, one studio-recorded, the other live...and what a difference! The fact that the live version features a broader *Adagio* is of marginal interest but more to the point is its highly charged atmosphere and the added intensity of the string playing. The finale is surely one of the great recorded Bruckner performances, in spite of some interpretative (editorial?) peculiarities (a "Gates of Heaven" episode that rockets from *ppp* to *fff* and an abrupt final chord for the last tortuous climax). Both symphonies approximate, in Knappertsbusch's hands, the billowing storm clouds of Wagner's music dramas and bring the music newly to life, though collectors versed in Bruckner scholarship might balk at the editions used. There are also two versions of Schubert's *Unfinished*, again quite different in detail (Knappertsbusch plumbed the depths of this piece just as Furtwängler did), as well as an affable Haydn *Surprise* Symphony and a gruff though solidly built Beethoven Eighth. As for the lighter fare (*The Nutcracker* Suite, Otto Nicolai, Johann Strauss II, Karel Komzák II), Knappertsbusch certainly knew how to relax, though never to the extent of losing the shape of a piece. It's here more than in the classics that we smile at his fat textures, broad tempi and warmly arched phrasing, his humanness, which makes this set such a pleasure to dip into.

Although recorded a few years later, "Sir John Barbirolli in New York" (1959) isn't quite so pleasing, sound-wise, though the pleasure of hearing Richard Lewis, Maureen Forrester and the less familiar Morley Meredith enter fully into the spirit of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* soon banishes any doubts about the variable sound quality. The *Introduction and Allegro* is given a big, broad reading, weighty and impassioned, and there's a suite of five movements from *The Planets*, opening with a particularly gruelling "Mars". A warm-hearted Mahler First Symphony has already been released as part of the New York Philharmonic's Mahler symphony collection (1/99), and there are chunky and communicative versions of Brahms's Violin Concerto (with Berl Senovsky), Haydn's 88th, Vaughan Williams's Eighth and, least appealing perhaps, Barbirolli's own *Elizabethan Suite*. But the Elgar items are surely essential listening for all fans of this great conductor.

The **Barbirolli Society**'s own sizeable catalogue includes a good number of New York Philharmonic broadcasts but their latest programme hales from the Royal Albert Hall, a Prom, again from 1959, featuring Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony in a performance that marries the

expected warmth (how lovely to hear those cello *portamentos* in the *Andantino*) with an imposing level of drama: the climactic moment in the finale where the opening fanfares return is mind-bogglingly powerful. The programme also includes the first UK performance of Bohuslav Martinů's Oboe Concerto, H353, with Lady Barbirolli as soloist, a performance that also haunts the memory.

Barbirolli's 1959 Tchaikovsky/Martinů recordings are in mono but Pristine Audio have recently achieved the unimaginable by releasing **Arturo Toscanini**'s hair-raising 1951 NBC Verdi Requiem in stereo. What we have are two separate recordings with independent microphone placements, and the result, although strictly speaking not stereo in the "two-track tape" sense of the term, does allow for some directional information – which is especially noticeable in the choral singing and the echoing trumpets in the "Tuba mirum". The one trivial disappointment is that Toscanini's urging shouts, which were such a thrilling component on the dry, mono RCA transfer (12/56), are inaudible. True, there is some vinyl surface noise and some minor clouding of detail, but the effect is still pretty stunning, a version to own alongside RCA's straight tape transfer I'd suggest, an added dimension rather than a replacement. Toscanini's vocal line-up for 1951 was Herva Nelli, Fedora Barbieri, Giuseppe di Stefano and Cesare Siepi, whereas for his 1940 NBC broadcast he chose a partially superior team consisting of Zinka Milanov, Bruna Castagna, Jussi Björling and Nicola Moscona. The 1940 performance, another excellent transfer, is broader and tighter than the one from 1951, and the vocal team is very much dominated by Milanov and Björling. Sound-wise, the balance engineers thrust the singers in your face, but given the overall quality of the singing, who's complaining? Both performances stand head and shoulders above most recorded rivals. The 1940 set also includes Toscanini's NBC broadcasts of Verdi's original, discarded *Aida* Overture (exciting but no masterpiece) and Castelnuovo-Tedesco's attractive *Taming of the Shrew* Overture.

Toscanini's 1943 English-language NBC relay of Brahms's *German Requiem* (with Vivian della Chiesa and Herbert Janssen) is both warmly phrased and, in the mighty second movement (taken very slowly), extremely imposing. Mediocre transfers have come and gone, some with hum and distortion, but Pristine achieves a cleaner, fuller sound than most, so that we can appreciate this elevating interpretation afresh.

'The finale is surely one of the great recorded Bruckner performances'

THE RECORDINGS

Various Cpsrs Complete RIAS Recs **Knappertsbusch**

Audite (M) ⑤ AUDITE21 405

Elgar, Holst, etc Wks **Barbirolli**

West Hill Radio Archives (M) ④ WHRA6033

Tchaikovsky Sym No 4 **Barbirolli**

Barbirolli Society (M) SJB1044

Verdi Requiem (r1951) **Toscanini**

Pristine Audio (S) PAC0048

Verdi Requiem (r1940) **Toscanini**

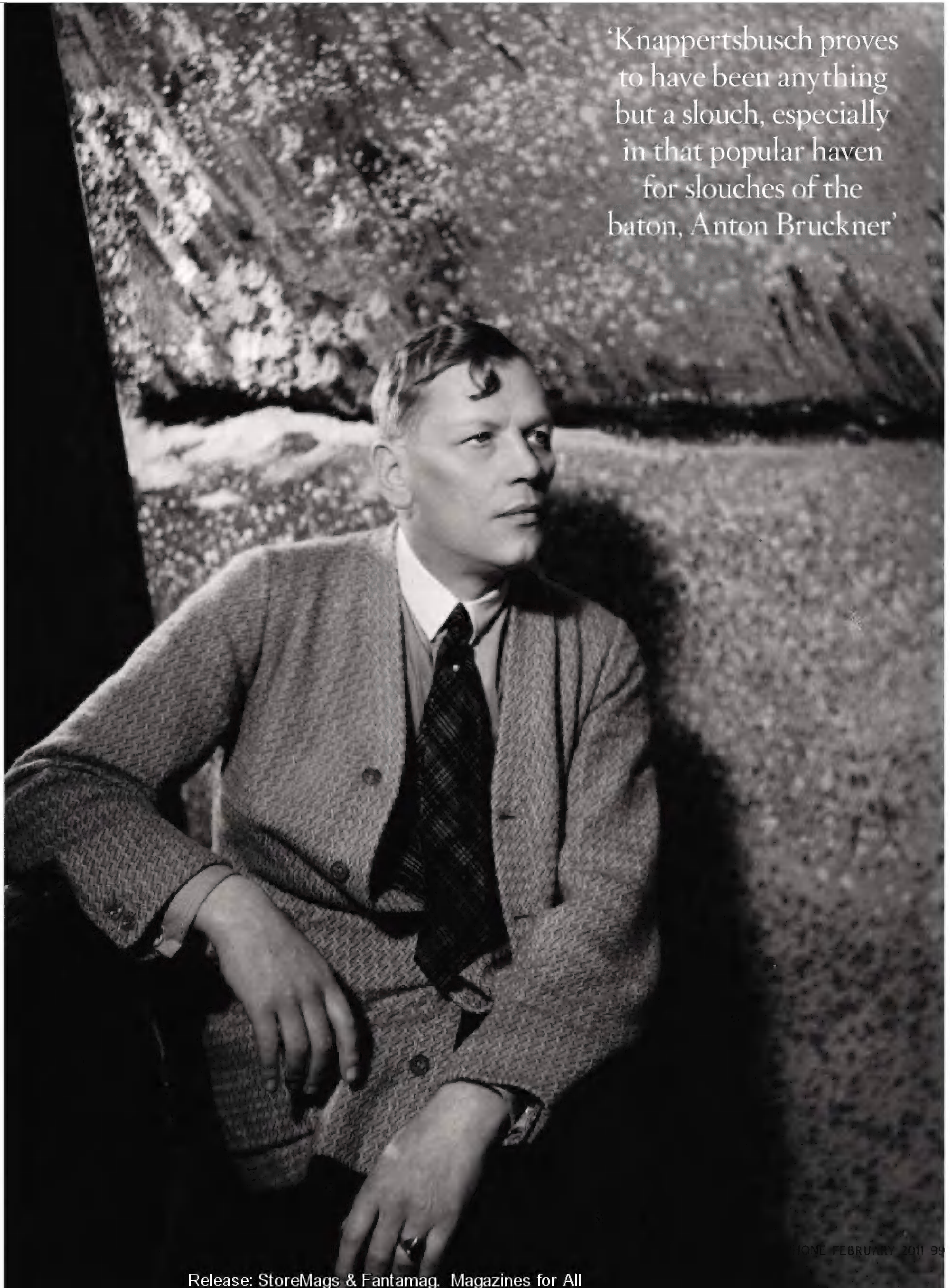
Pristine Audio (S) ② PAC0038

Brahms German Requiem (r1943) **Toscanini**

Pristine Audio (S) ② PAC0050



'Knappertsbusch proves
to have been anything
but a slouch, especially
in that popular haven
for slouches of the
baton, Anton Bruckner'





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Previously unpublished
SBT 1397



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Mahler: Symphony No.2
Ilona Steingruber · Hilde Rössl-Majdan · Wiener Symphoniker
Recorded live, May 1951
Previously unpublished
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Bruckner: Symphony No.7
Wiener Symphoniker
Recorded live, February 1958
Previously unpublished
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REPLAY

Toscanini, Walter and Wolfsthal

Including an electrifying reading of Mahler's First Symphony

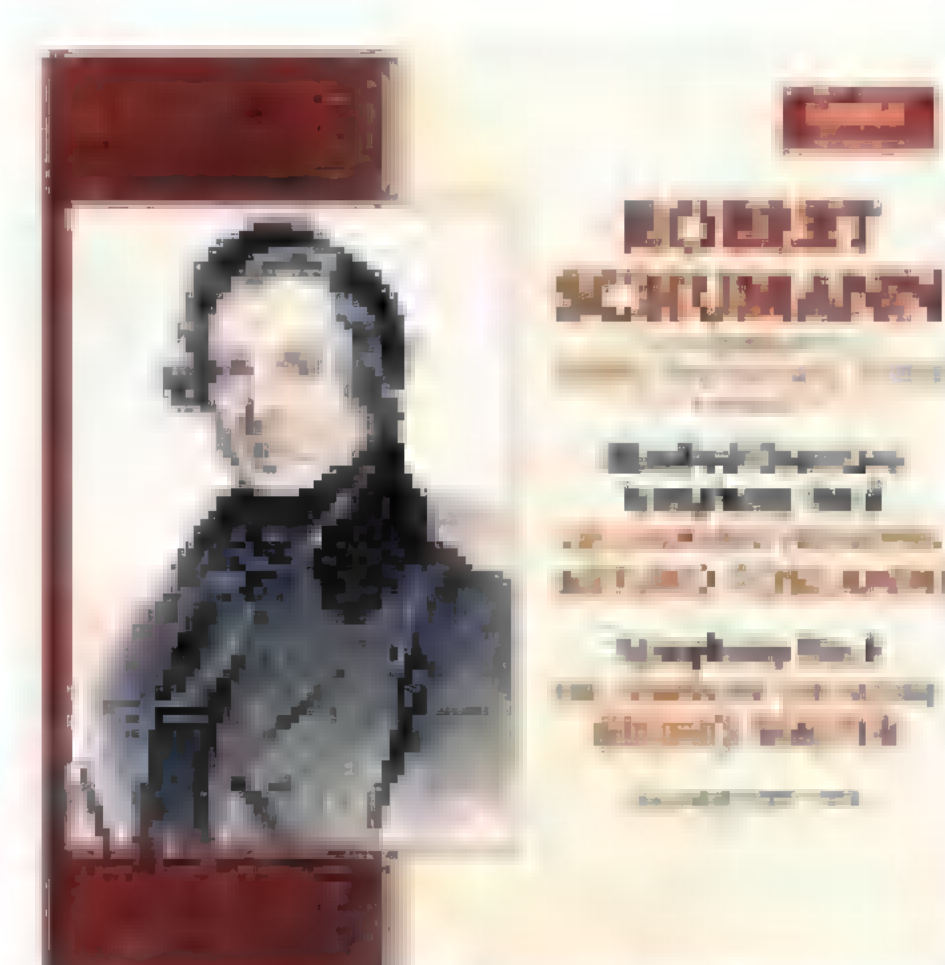
Guild have also been busy refurbishing NBC broadcasts, though I wish they hadn't employed quite so much filtering in the process. The opening of Schumann's *Manfred* Overture (October 10, 1946) sounds pretty airless, though the ensuing drama draws you in sufficiently to act as a distraction. Guild choose **Arturo Toscanini's** 1946 broadcast of Schumann's Second Symphony over its 1941 predecessor, which is useful given that the later version is less frequently aired. But there's little doubt in my mind that the leaner, more dynamically inflected version from five years earlier is the finer of the two, though the 1946 option is marginally better recorded. Guild's CD also includes a 1940 Bruno Walter NBC broadcast of Schumann's Fourth Symphony, not a work that Walter recorded commercially, and the combination of the NBC's gutsy playing style and Walter's expressive generosity makes for a compelling performance, less finely detailed than Toscanini's Second but just as powerful and robust.

However, the real **Bruno Walter**/NBC "corker" comes from Music & Arts, even though it features repertoire we've already had (more than once) from this much-underrated conductor, someone who, as an interpreter, is too often labelled as "gentle" or "soft-option". Not, however, for his concert on April 9, 1939, when he conducted one of the most electrifying performances of Mahler's First Symphony you're ever likely to hear. The finale alone is enough to strike terror into the hardest soul, its tempo recklessly fast, the playing real seat-of-the-pants stuff. The Wagner couplings – the *Faust* Overture and *Siegfried Idyll* – maintain the high levels of tension and the sound is pretty good...and sensitively refurbished.

Walter as pianist appears on a Pristine Audio transfer in more Schumann, **Lotte Lehmann's** vibrant if occasionally over-earnest 1941 American Columbia versions of the song-cycles *Dichterliebe* and *Frauenliebe und -leben*. The latter is for me the more moving performance of the two: the aching nostalgia of both the music and the poetry suit a singer in her early fifties, and Lehmann seems less hard-pressed than in *Dichterliebe*. The transfers are excellent, as they are for a coupling of two little-known 1928/29 Berlin concerto recordings by violinist **Josef Wolfsthal**, who was lost to us in 1931 during a flu epidemic, at the age of 31. Wolfsthal's playing combines energy and tonal refinement, his Mozart Fifth always elegantly phrased, his Beethoven Concerto noble but never aloof. Frieder Weissmann and Manfred Gurlitt conduct, and Mark Obert-Thorn has done excellent work with notoriously difficult shellac originals.

THE RECORDINGS

Schumann Syms Nos 2 & 4. *Manfred* Ov
NBC SO / Toscanini; Walter Guild ® GHCD2362
Mahler Sym No 1 **NBC SO / Walter**
Music & Arts ® MACD1241
Schumann *Dichterliebe*. *Frauenliebe und -leben*
L Lehmann / Walter Pristine Audio © PAC0046
Mozart Vn Conc No 5 **Beethoven** Vn Conc
Wolfsthal Pristine Audio © PASC239



Musical mainstays of the 1950s

Solomon, Casadesus and Fricssay

Audite have released a well-produced double-pack of "The 1956 RIAS recordings of **Solomon**". Most of the items have already appeared on APR (4/95), the contents – Bach's *Italian Concerto*, Beethoven's Sonatas Nos 3 and 14, Brahms's *Intermezzos* Op 116 No 4 and Op 118 No 6, the *Rhapsody* Op 79 No 1, and a Chopin group (the F minor Fantaisie, the First Nocturne and the Second Scherzo). But I'd never heard the recording of Schumann's *Carnaval* from the same period and was interested to compare it with Solomon's quietly characterful 1952 EMI studio recording (now on Testament, 7/97). As it happens, there's very little to choose between them, save for the brighter, slightly shallower sound on the broadcast. So if you already have the APR and Testament discs, I'm not sure I'd bother.

However, if you've never acquired the 1959 (Philips) coupling of Beethoven's First and Fourth Piano Concertos with **Robert Casadesus** and the Concertgebouw Orchestra under Eduard van Beinum, Pristine Audio now affords you the opportunity. These are coolly considered, clear-headed performances, fluent, profoundly classical in style and sonically well balanced. In a word, satisfying – and you have the added interest of Casadesus's own cadenzas. Pristine have also released an earlier (mono) Casadesus recording of Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* with the New York Philharmonic under Dimitri Mitropoulos, translucent,

often exciting playing, vividly accompanied. The same all-Falla CD also includes Mitropoulos's highly individual versions of *Three Dances* from *The Three-Cornered Hat* and the "Interlude and Dance" from *La vida breve*. If you want big, "butch" Falla, then Mitropoulos is your man.

And for a vivacious, affectionately phrased **Johann Strauss II** miscellany you could hardly do better than an Audite disc of early 1950s radio recordings by the RIAS Symphony Orchestra under Ferenc Fricssay. This is Strauss in the tradition of Reiner, Dorati and Szell, disciplined but loving. Shame about a couple of nasty edits in the *Kaiser-Walzer* – otherwise the sound more or less matches any good commercial recording of the period. ☺

THE RECORDINGS

Beethoven Pf Sons Nos 3 & 14, etc **Solomon**
Audite ® ② AUDITE23 422
Beethoven Pf Concs Nos 1 & 4 **Casadesus,**
van Beinum Pristine Audio © PASC243
Falla *Nights in the Garden of Spain* **Casadesus,**
Mitropoulos Pristine Audio © PASC244
J Strauss II Waltzes **Fricssay**
Audite ® AUDITE95 629



Books

Getting to know Cage • Notes on notation • Re-evaluating Weinberg

Begin Again: A Biography of John Cage

By Kenneth Silverman

AA Knopf, New York, HB, 496pp, £25

ISBN 978-1-40004-437-5

A BIOGRAPHY
JOHN
CAGE

There's a wealth of hitherto unknown detail about Cage in this scrupulously researched biography. That's not surprising when a professional such as the Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer Kenneth

Silverman tackles Cage after completing exhaustive studies of such contrasted figures as the escapologist Houdini, the Puritan New England clergyman Cotton Mather and Edgar Allan Poe. In this 400-page study Cage emerges from the considerate chrysalis of accounts from friends and colleagues who have often accepted him on his own terms.

Cage was not *sui generis*. His father was an inventor whose ideas proliferated in many directions, including developing a remedy for colds and predicting satellite TV. As general manager of the Los Angeles Submarine Boat Company he created a world record for submergence with his submarine in 1913 – a widely publicised achievement. Later Cage *père* said he was concerned with “radical advances in thinking” overthrowing “traditional patterns we have acquired through years of hard work at school”. Sounds familiar? In 1942 Cage provided the soundtrack for a CBS radio programme about Kenneth Patchen. His mother, impressed, thought he didn't get enough credit and warned: “Whether we like it or not we have to stoop to the sordidness of self preservation and claim our rights. It is so easy for the creative mind to forget that fact.”

Cage learnt that lesson too but his self-promotion was never sordid. He began life as John Milton Cage junior, since his father had the same name: they got on well and Cage worked on some of his father's projects. There's new information here about Cage's marriage to Xenia Kashevaroff, daughter of the Archpriest of the Eastern Orthodox Russian-Greek Church of Alaska (Virgil Thomson used to call her the Eskimo). Silverman uncovers Cage's male and female



(Left to right) Christian Wolff, Earle Brown, John Cage, David Tudor and Morton Feldman in 1962

relationships before his marriage, which ended in divorce, but the real partnership of Cage's life was, of course, with Merce Cunningham, a professional and personal connection that profoundly affected the history of 20th-century dance.

Cage's friendships were intense – Eastern gurus, Buckminster Fuller, Marshall McLuhan and, among the dead, Satie, Thoreau and Joyce. Cage built on their ideas, deriving music or text. With Feldman, Brown and Wolff – and the pianist David Tudor – Cage was the inspiration for the New York School. Painters were important too and Cage later worked in the visual arts. But within the group of composers Feldman disliked Brown and Brown criticised Cage. The use of chance was controversial. Cage failed to convince Boulez or a close friend such as Lou Harrison who famously said: “I would rather chance a choice than choose a chance”.

In 1952, when Cage decided to cut his own personality out of his work, he used the I Ching, first based on tossing coins but later computerised. He spent ages creating vast decision-making mechanisms to guarantee such a random result that he had no idea how it would come out: “I never imagine anything until I experience it.” Silverman traces the procedures applied to a long series of

commissioned works where Cage often used willing assistants to carry out his laborious schemes, such as travelling throughout Ireland and soliciting recordings from all over the world for his epoch-making radio feature *Roaratorio* in 1979.

Silverman chronicles Cage's naive politics and his rise to international celebrity, providing statistics about his commission fees and donations. There are photographs within the text, little space for musical details but, as anticipated, this is a book that will undoubtedly fascinate anyone seriously interested in Cage and his context.

Peter Dickinson

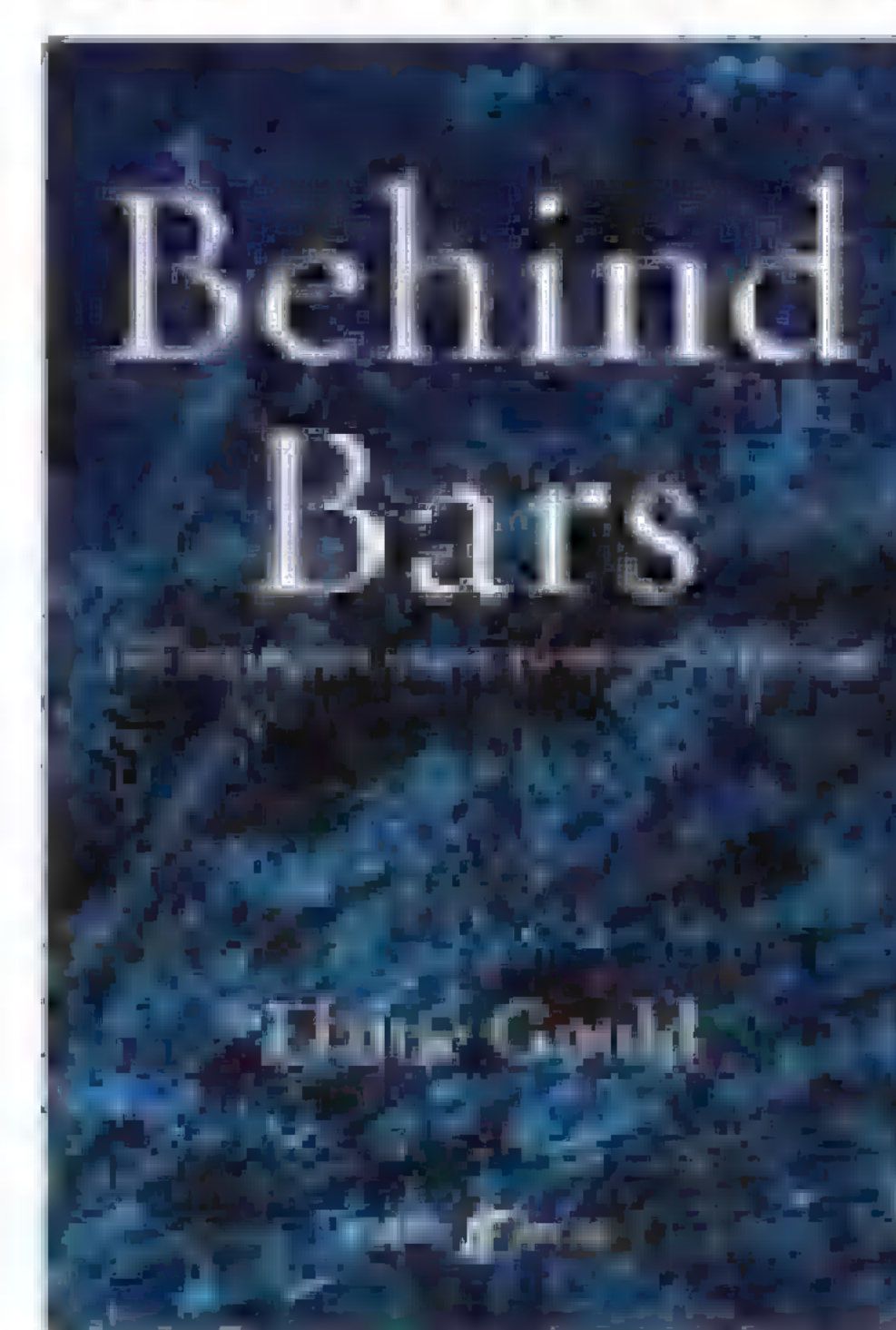
Behind Bars

The Definitive Guide to Music Notation

By Elaine Gould

Faber Music, HB, 704pp, £65

ISBN 978-0-571514-56-4



Say “musical composition” and you identify a process: but “a musical composition” is very much a product, a commodity: and never more so than when it takes the form of materials from which performers sing or play,

and academics build their theories about music history and aesthetics.

Philosophers might continue to agonise about the extent to which a printed score represents the composition. Performers are much more likely to agonise about whether the materials put before them make sense and, if you ask professional musicians where they would like to see composers whose materials create tough challenges for them, “behind bars” would be one of the politer suggestions forthcoming. Composers best able to avoid the lash of performers’ hostility are those lucky enough to work with a well-established publishing operation, and that means an editor like Faber Music’s Elaine Gould. After more than 20 years in the business, Gould has seen (and heard) it all and *Behind Bars* is an encyclopedic distillation of practical professional wisdom, fully justifying its bold subtitle, “The Definitive Guide to Music Notation”.

Not even Gould can teach you how to compose a good work, of course: but her book is a matchless source of practical advice, all geared to the wryly understated observation that “players will tend to be well disposed towards a work whose instrumental parts are carefully prepared”. The book has three main parts: “General Conventions” discusses the notational basics of pitch and rhythm, “Idiomatic Notation” has a section for each of the instrumental families, with harp and classical guitar treated separately, and one for voices: finally, “Layout and Presentation” deals not only with the creation of a conventional score, but with issues in electro-acoustic and computer music that bring the story bang up to date. The copious illustrations in music type (Richard Emsley was the indefatigable typesetter) show how not to do things as well as how best to do them, and although Gould makes occasional use of extracts from such composers as Elliott Carter and Jonathan Harvey, the bulk of the illustrations – which, it has to be said, vary considerably in their relation to “real” music – are (presumably) of her own “composition”, with help from those members of the Faber Music family mentioned in her Acknowledgements.

Gould’s text inevitably reflects the piecemeal manner in which music notation has evolved, with its (for outsiders) crazy mixture of instructions in French, Italian, and other languages, but offering a salutary demonstration of cultural pluralism in action, and all in the service of what is still sometimes hailed as the “universal language” of music. Perhaps that should be Western music, since other musics seem not to need guides such as this. Notation can never be so rigidly “definitive” that it leaves absolutely nothing to the imagination of interpreters: but Gould’s guide is as good a source as

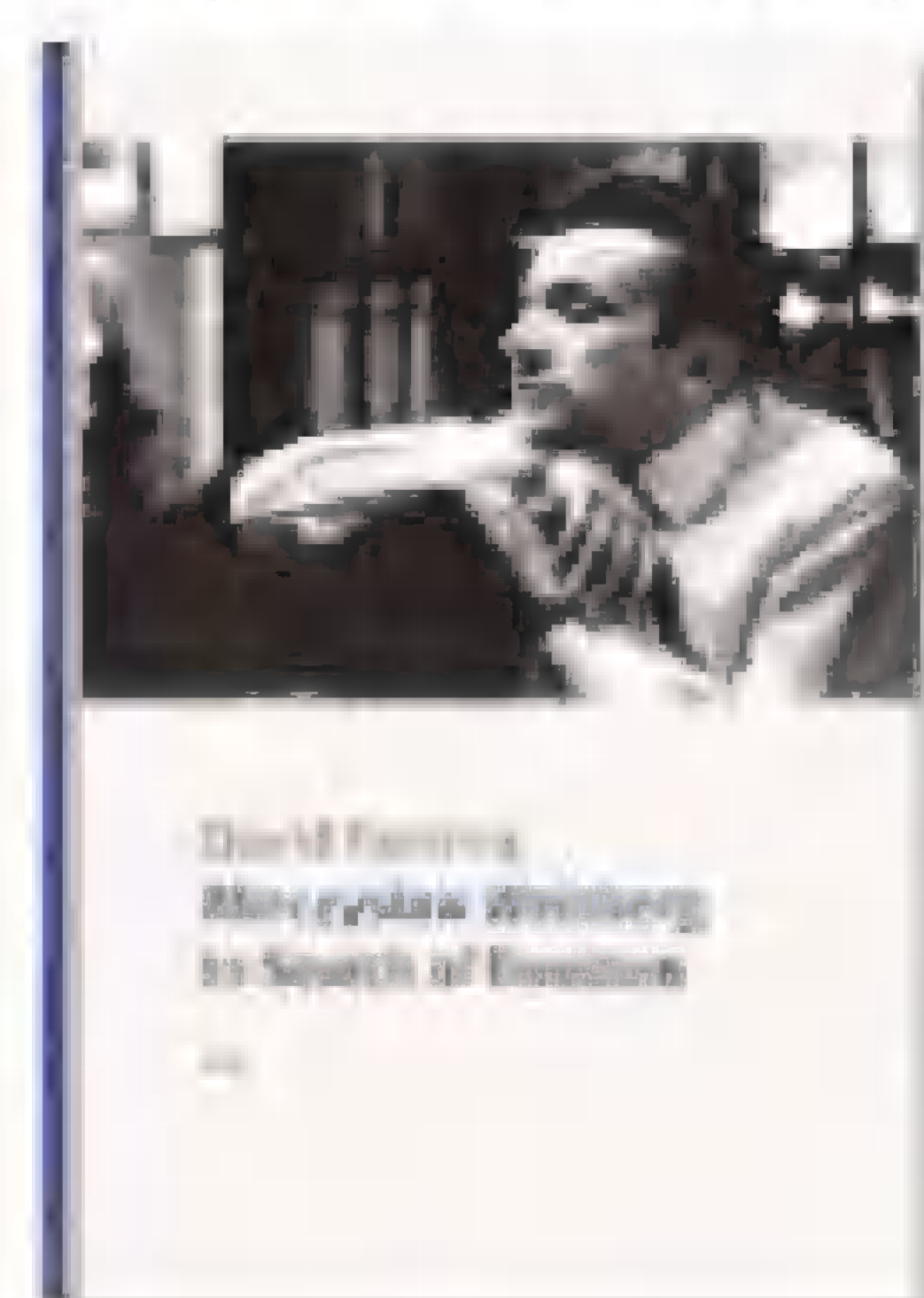
you can get for how to ensure that your score and parts are approached in a positive spirit by those contracted to realise them as living sound. **Arnold Whittall**

Mieczysław Weinberg: In Search of Freedom

By David Fanning

Wolke Verlag, 220pp, HB, £23

ISBN 978-3-936000-91-7



How important a composer is Mieczysław Weinberg (1919-96)? Until recently he played but a walk-on part in printed histories of Soviet music, the few citations rendered more

obscure by the unpredictable transliteration of his name. Born Mieczysław Wajnberg, he was Moisei Vainberg when the first recordings reached us, the tip of a musical iceberg still generally dismissed as the product of a minor Shostakovich imitator. More recently it has emerged that their association was one of enduring mutual respect rather than the affiliation of master and pupil, the influences operating in both directions. There are even suggestions that it is Weinberg rather than Myaskovsky, Khachaturian, Shchedrin or the various members of a once marginalised avant-garde whom we should see as the likeliest third man of Soviet music after Prokofiev and Shostakovich.

David Fanning, an ardent admirer (and *Gramophone* contributor) whose engagement with Weinberg has only just begun, has written a sensible, gap-filling overview which will serve as the key reference point for enthusiasts and sceptics alike. The monograph is a classically structured life and works in 13 chapters preceded by an introduction and capped with a bibliography and useful recordings and work lists. Its German origin is a reminder that the work that Weinberg himself considered his most important, the Holocaust opera *The Passenger* (1967-68), has recently been given its belated stage premiere at David Pountney’s Bregenz Festival in a production destined, eventually, for London and New York. Few composers have managed to treat this subject with credibility or discretion – the aesthetic car crash that was Nicholas Maw’s *Sophie’s Choice* effectively ended his career – and the staging may make or break Weinberg’s posthumous reputation too. Like Bohuslav Martinů or Richard Strauss, Weinberg composed “as a cow gives milk” – symphonies and string quartets, operas, concertos, sonatas and song-cycles. Without a magnum opus it can be difficult to know where to begin, although the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies (1962 and 1962-63) are plausible contenders.

Weinberg’s life story, still possibly more familiar than his music, is lucidly told here, dovetailed with an examination of key works. Born in Warsaw, the son of Moldavian Jews, Weinberg was the only member of his immediate family to escape from the Nazis. Logically enough he fled east, initially to Minsk, then further east to Tashkent. Having settled in Moscow, he seems to have fared well enough until the Zhdanov purges of 1948 which coincided with the state-sponsored murder of his father-in-law, the actor Solomon Mikhoels. Five years later Weinberg himself was arrested (he was related by marriage to a principal defendant in Stalin’s trumped-up Doctor’s Plot) but the dictator died before unleashing a new wave of anti-Semitic Terror and Weinberg was released with the assistance of Shostakovich, his friend since 1943. Less than a year later they would record their famous piano duet version of Shostakovich’s Tenth Symphony.

In the 1960s Weinberg achieved financial security as a film composer and many of his works were performed by the biggest names in Soviet Russian music. Others, ideologically too hot to handle, were neglected yet the composer himself seems to have remained grateful to the Red Army and, in all probability, supported the underlying values of a society which had rescued, educated and fed him. Neither opportunistically conformist nor deliberately subversive, Weinberg lived only for composition. The liberal intelligentsia would seem to have cold-shouldered him after his divorce from Nataliya Vovsi-Mikhoels and his eventual remarriage to the much younger Olga Rakhalskaya may also have set hackles rising. Shortly before his death Weinberg converted to the Russian Orthodox Church. He left unfinished his 22nd Symphony, dedicated to “Olga, my wife”.

Thus, or so Fanning argues, it was Weinberg’s perpetual fate to fall between the cracks, a diffident nature contributing to the neglect that blighted his last years. By this time, perceptions of the marketable and the exotic in Russian music had skipped a generation and Weinberg’s exhibitionistically rebellious colleagues were finding fame and fortune abroad. A diet of Schnittke, Denisov and Gubaidulina – Fanning is quite rude about them – may or may not renew your respect for Weinberg’s more traditional craftsmanship. His “message” has nothing to do with communism or anti-communism although he might have been comfortable with the label of anti-fascist. We are assured that Weinberg, like Shostakovich, addresses what it means to be a human being and an artist in the turbulent 20th century. Whether he does so with the genius and individuality of his mentor is a matter for posterity. **David Gutman**

Tune Surfing

James Jolly on download store Ariama, the Chart podcast and the Monteverdi Choir in cyberspace



Music lovers stateside have a fine new destination for downloading their music – and temptingly it offers music from a very broad selection of about 50 record labels, with majors and independents well balanced. Ariama (ariama.com) has been created by Sony but it lives as an independent entity, separate from its parent company (so no special treatment for Sony artists!).

The design is clean, it's easy to navigate and the environment feels right for classical music – and the editorialising is informed and well written (you can find a fair number of *Gramophone* reviews on the site and we are an Ariama media partner, so we must declare an interest). There's also a genuine sense of a shared passion for classical music and its world

throughout the site (a large listing of Grammy Award nominees was posted very soon after details were released, for example).

Downloads are offered either as 320kbps MP3 files or as lossless FLAC. The site has a handy download manager which makes the process pretty easy, although you can still download individual files.

The FAQs are clear and easy to follow, and the whole site feels as if it has been put together by a group of people who have experience of acquiring their music digitally, who have a nice sense of design and who realise that downloads are different from CDs (a fault committed by quite a few digital stores with their obsession with labels and sub-labels). You can also buy CDs and SACDs from the

site – so even if you're not into downloading, it's worth exploring.

A European launch is not far off, so I'll let non-US readers know when it's available to explore (currently, the rest of the world can browse but not purchase).

Another good excuse to plan a quick holiday to the States is the news that the Los Angeles Philharmonic has signed a deal with NCM Fathom to offer three performances from its new season in selected cinemas across the US. Via high-definition cameras and 5.1 digital surround sound, music lovers will be able to watch the LAPO's charismatic young music director Gustavo Dudamel in action in a trio of concerts starting on January 9 (music by Adams, Bernstein and Beethoven). The concerts are all supplemented by live interviews with Gustavo Dudamel, soloists and LA Phil musicians, rehearsal footage of preparation for the concert and a live post-concert question-and-answer session with Dudamel. The concerts take place at 2pm West Coast time, which means that East Coast audiences will be able to watch them live at 5pm. The other two concerts are on March 13 (an all-Tchaikovsky programme with a Shakespearean theme) and on June 5 (Brahms's Fourth Symphony and Double Concerto, with brothers Renaud and Gautier Capuçon). More details on the LAPO's website (laphil.com).

European audiences, incidentally, have the chance to see and hear the LAPO in the flesh this January and February, as Dudamel leads the orchestra on a seven-city tour (London's Barbican plays host on January 27 and 28).

Should you be interested in the Specialist Classical Chart – and weekly updates are carried online at gramophone.co.uk – you can listen again to the weekly coverage of the Chart on BBC Radio 3's *Breakfast*. Rob Cowan and Sara Mohr-Pietsch dip into the risers and fallers each Tuesday after 8am – but now you can download a podcast of that segment of the programme and listen at your convenience. Just go to bbc.co.uk/podcasts.

I was at a recording session recently and, rather late in the day, it was suggested to the pianist in question that as a bonus to the two large Schumann works on the menu, "Träumerei" from *Kinderszenen* might make

The essential download playlist No 38 Monteverdi Choir

Bach Cantatas, Vol 1 EBS / Gardiner (SDG) [iT](#), [eM](#), [A](#), [CO](#)

Beethoven Missa solemnis EBS / Gardiner (Archiv) [DG](#), [IT](#), [A](#)

L Boulanger, Stravinsky LSO / Gardiner (DG) [DG](#), [IT](#), [A](#)

Brahms Begräbnisgesang, etc ORR / Gardiner (SDG) [iT](#), [eM](#), [A](#), [CO](#)

Fauré Requiem ORR / Gardiner (Philips) [DG](#), [IT](#), [A](#)

Grainger Choral works English Country Gardiner Orch / Gardiner (Philips) [DG](#), [IT](#), [A](#)

Haydn Die Schöpfung EBS / Gardiner (Archiv) [DG](#), [IT](#), [A](#)

Lehár Die lustige Witwe VPO / Gardiner (DG) [DG](#), [IT](#), [A](#)


Mozart Così fan tutte EBS / Gardiner (Archiv) [DG](#), [IT](#), [A](#)

Verdi Requiem ORR / Gardiner (Philips) [DG](#), [IT](#), [A](#)

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a nice bonus for iTunes. The music was not to hand and a series of frantic phone-calls resulted in a faxed copy and – finally – a rather lovely performance. Well, a website called Piano Street could have solved the matter rather more swiftly! It contains thousands of piano scores that are easily downloadable and printable. I thought I'd try out "Träumerei" and within a minute it was sitting on my printer ready to be played. If you play the piano, it's a resource well worth exploring: just visit pianostreet.com and register as a Silver member to access three free downloads. The site works on a subscription basis.

There are all sorts of editorial features, forums and extras on the site. I particularly enjoyed revisiting the NVC Arts documentary, *The Art of Piano: Great Pianists of the 20th Century*, which contains footage of many of the piano legends, including Horowitz, Rubinstein (a wonderful Chopin *Heroic Polonaise*), Rachmaninov, Gould, Cortot, Paderewski and Cziffra – to select just a few of the 18 pianists featured. I found Dame Myra Hess in the first movement of Beethoven's *Appassionata* Sonata (clearly filmed in wartime, with half the audience in uniform) quite extraordinary – a rock-solid technique and an ability to invest the music with colossal power that is simply breathtaking.

The anointing by *Gramophone* of Sir John Eliot Gardiner's superb Monteverdi Choir as the "World's Greatest" calls for a download playlist (left), and though the period covered is necessarily wide (he founded the choir in 1964), the consistency down the years is quite remarkable. I have to include one of the albums from the 2000 Bach Cantata Pilgrimage and have opted for the disc which took Recording of the Year in 2005 – music-making caught on the wing during one of the most ambitious and rewarding projects ever undertaken. As a devoted Brahmsian, I await his new *German Requiem* with impatience, but as consolation have put in the disc that includes the wonderful *Begräbnisgesang*, a piece that draws on a similar language. From his DG years, musts are Haydn's *The Creation* and the *Gramophone* Award-winning Beethoven *Missa solennis*. The disc that couples Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* with works by Lili Boulanger finds the francophile Gardiner and his choir on top form – and in that vein the Philips disc of Fauré's *Requiem* is quite wonderful too. The Award-winning Percy Grainger disc is another favourite, and the Verdi *Requiem* is surely one of the work's great recordings. From the operatic catalogue – and to demonstrate further the Monteverdi Choir's adaptability – I'd add Lehár's *The Merry Widow* and Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. 

BLOGWATCH

www.gramophone.co.uk/blog/shaping-the-invisible/musicdrama-or-dramamusic



British maestro Mark Wigglesworth first conducted opera in 1991, directing Opera Factory's *Così*. Since then, he's been to the Garden and the Met, via ENO, Glyndebourne and Brussels, so he knows of what he speaks when it comes to interacting with directors...

Relationships between opera conductors and stage directors are rarely straightforward. It is hardly surprising that when two individuals are employed to encourage a group of people to follow their vision of a work, tensions arise if that vision isn't unanimous. But if the two individuals concerned have sufficient confidence to welcome interpretative discussion and the kind of ego that isn't threatened by having its authority challenged, you get a stimulating and interesting working environment that undoubtedly leads to the best result – that leads, in fact, to "Opera": an art form in which neither music nor drama should dominate at the expense of the other, and in which both lead without either being left behind.

One could argue that the relationship between conductor and director should be

the same as exists between composer and librettist. The words may be written first but the composer will not hesitate to ask for changes should the text not fit their musical ideas. There is no doubt who is in charge, and as a result, rarely does a librettist share equal billing with a composer. I imagine most directors would be against this hierarchy.

All great opera composers are essentially great dramatists and understand the theatre as well as any playwright. But to give conductors the same power over the staging as the composer had over the drama is to presume that they have equally fine dramatic sensitivities. If that is the case, then the conductors deserve their say. After all, they are in charge during the actual performance, while the director doesn't need to be there at all. The most successful directors realise that unless they can persuade the conductor of their view, the musical and dramatic performances will be at best coincidental. They certainly won't offer the unified interpretation that a piece needs to speak deeply and directly to its public.

Opera works when the director cares about the music as much as the conductor cares about the drama and when both appreciate the fact that neither of them can do their job properly without it being supported by the other. An opera is neither a play with music nor a concert in fancy dress, and because of that, both conductor and director need to be able to be free to make decisions at the same time. Perhaps it should be like rally driving, in which one person steers and the other decides which route to take. And if they keep their crash helmets on, you can't tell who is who.

There's nothing wrong with a bit of friction though. If conductors can challenge directors into making choices that they had not discovered on their own, and if the director does the same in return, both will have benefited from the other's influence. The director will have taken decisions that allow the singers to sing better and the conductor made choices that allow the singers to act better. When that is the case, neither conductor nor director will have won – only the piece itself.

On gramophone.co.uk

The *Gramophone* Player offers music from Editor's Choice recordings, a newly transferred Archive performance, and Collection recommendations back-to-back. Philip Clark, meanwhile, explores the link between recording and listening, from Stokowski's dreams to Cage's realisations, and towards 21st-century ideals of immersive listening.



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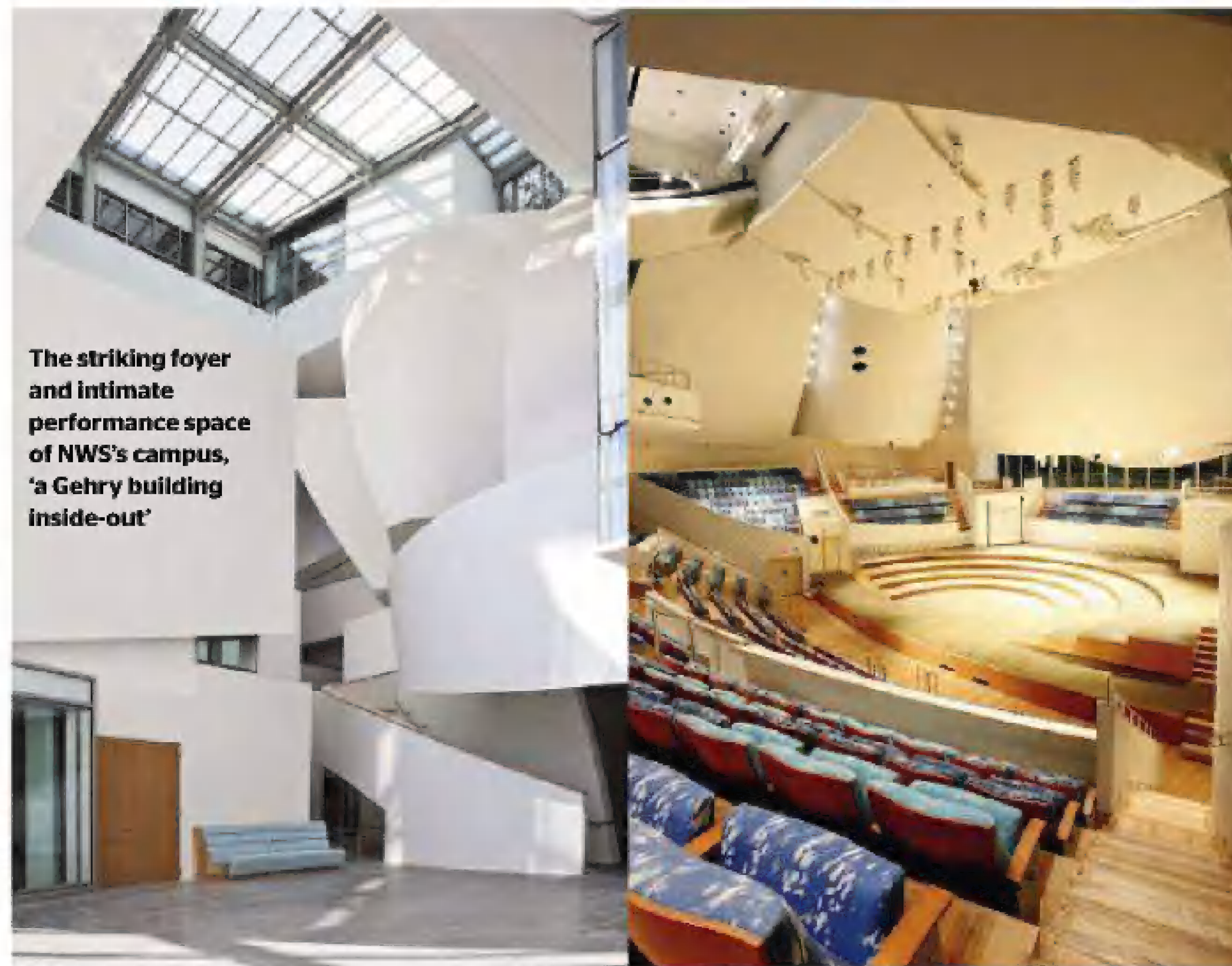
Bournemouth

Miami Nice

Andrew Farach-Colton

visits South Beach's latest arts venue, Frank Gehry's campus for the New World Symphony

The striking foyer and intimate performance space of NWS's campus, 'a Gehry building inside-out'



South Beach, Miami

Just 30 years ago, South Beach was one of Florida's poorest neighbourhoods. Once an upscale resort, its sleek Art Deco buildings had become dilapidated and its streets were rife with drug-dealing and violence. Some credit *Miami Vice* with saving South Beach, because that popular mid-'80s television programme bestowed a *noir*-like chic on the blighted area, aiding a grassroots effort to preserve the area's unique architectural character.

Fashion photographers, eager to make the most of the glam setting, swooped in. Beachfront hotels were renovated, shops and restaurants sprouted. Soon the arts were flourishing. Miami Ballet was established in 1986, and a year later Michael Tilson Thomas founded the New World Symphony (NWS). With the folding of the Florida Philharmonic in 1982, Miami needed a high-calibre orchestra, and the NWS was that – but also, as "America's orchestral academy", much more.

The New World Symphony's members come from the top music schools and are granted three-year fellowships, acquiring extensive and intensive professional-level training and performance experience, including a full season of innovatively programmed orchestral concerts. The New World Symphony has quickly become a prestigious national institution; last year, there were some 1100 applicants for just 30 places.

Until now, the orchestra has lived in the Lincoln Theatre, a charming 1930s Art Deco movie house, re-purposed as a concert hall. But the theatre's acoustic is extremely dry and backstage space is cramped. So, some 15 years ago, Tilson Thomas began thinking about a new home. The conductor's dream coincided with the efforts of former Miami Beach mayor Neisen Kasdin to create a true city centre for South Beach.

Now that dream is a reality. On January 25, the NWS was due to move into a state-of-the-art facility – both performance space and

academy (with rehearsal space and lecture rooms) – designed by Frank Gehry, architect of LA's Walt Disney Concert Hall. Acclaim for Disney Hall made Gehry a likely top contender for the Miami Beach project, but what clinched the deal was Gehry's lifelong friendship with Tilson Thomas. "I was eight when I first met Frank," the conductor says, adding with a wry smile: "He was my babysitter."

Those familiar with Gehry's style might be surprised at the comparatively plain exterior of the Miami academy's new campus. In MTT's words: "It's a Gehry building inside-out." A dramatic, 80-foot-high glass curtain wall on the east façade reveals the central atrium, with its cascading, stark-white geometric forms that seem to tumble from the ceiling. One can also see directly into a large rehearsal hall, a manifestation of the orchestra's desire to connect directly with the public.

The opposite side of the front exterior is strikingly austere in its blankness but it serves as a 7000-square-foot projection wall for high-definition video. The orchestra will project its own performances out-of-doors, of course, but it's also engaged in innovative artistic collaborations, such as a video version of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

Behind the projection wall is the concert hall itself, a balance of spaciousness and intimacy, with a 50-foot-high ceiling yet seating for only 756. As at Disney Hall, Gehry worked with the acoustician Yasuhisa Toyota. The stage is made up of 10 mechanical stage lifts, allowing for exceptional flexibility. A third of the seating can be easily tucked away, creating an open space for informal performances, such as the late-night Pulse events that combine contemporary music and DJ-spun electronica.

It is very much a 21st-century concert hall, not only in its adaptability but also in the way the entire structure bridges the gap between orchestra and audience. And this, apparently, is precisely what Tilson Thomas envisioned. "I have no doubt that this will be seen as a revolutionary building," he says. ●

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MUSICAL JOURNEYS



Mami Hagiwara:
nothing shy about her
Geneva performance

A host of young pianists vie for top prize at the 2010 Concours de Genève, reports **Caroline Gill**

Geneva

There aren't many things that will get me out of bed at 3.30am, let alone willingly. But if that's what I need to do in order not to miss the piano final of the prestigious Concours de Genève, then so be it. If I also get to listen to three major piano concertos (Prokofiev's Third, Rachmaninov's Second and Ravel's only) played by new-but-promising players, in quick succession with no break, then even better.

Geneva's international music competition has been running, uninterrupted, annually since 1939. Although its format has remained roughly the same throughout those years, what was occasionally a multi-disciplinary competition and limited in the war years to Swiss nationals or those domiciled there is now open to players from all over the world, and offers only two disciplines a year. This year it is piano, which alternates every other year with voice, and oboe. Although no first prize was awarded in the oboe heats (second prize went to the Russian Ivan Podyomov), when I arrive the winner of the piano final remains to be seen. Whoever it is, though, will join the likes of the competition's inaugural winner Arturo Benedetti-Michelangeli, Georg Solti

(a refugee in Switzerland when he won in 1942) and Martha Argerich.

The potential power of a multi-disciplinary competition in Geneva is an exciting prospect, but ask Didier Schnork (its current – and only third since it began – secretary-general) whether that would ever be a possibility and he'll chuckle, saying "If I had four times my budget maybe...perhaps I should talk to my authorities in Geneva!" But in any case, the original spirit of the competition is still there, down to the faded glamour of the Victoria Hall which feels like one of the grandiose music halls of the opening years of the 20th century with its gilt-robed mouldings, wicker seating and the blue sky and confetti *tromp l'oeil* that draws you up into its high ceiling, and imbues it all with the feeling that Switzerland could not be a better place to house this coalition of international musical perspective.

In the end the winner is the Japanese performer of the Ravel concerto, Mami Hagiwara. Schnork had described her playing as "lost somewhere in a flower garden – wonderful," and it's hard to tell whether her steps forward to collect the trophy are so tentative because she's still in it, or because she can't quite believe she has won. Either way, her joyfully tearful reaction is reason enough for the 5am flight to see it. ☺



Kirill Karabits finds
a marriage of minds
in Bournemouth

James Inverne returns to hear his home band,
and their new maestro, after too long away

Bournemouth

There can be something strange about returning to your home town after a long absence. The expectation that all will have stayed the same is inevitably dashed and yet there is so much that is familiar, it can seem to inhabit a slightly bizarre half-world, part now, part then, and you're never sure where you fit in.

For one thing, the Winter Gardens, sort-of-beloved home of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra for so many years, is no longer there. Neither is sister band the Sinfonietta.

Yet the BSO continues, its local base now the Lighthouse centre in neighbouring Poole. The centre's Wessex Hall has changed, too. New seats and a general refurb give better acoustics, not as good as the Winter Gardens of memory, if without the pink walls, but perfectly acceptable. And the orchestra itself has become more than ever a travelling band, serving a wide region – Basingstoke, Bristol, Exeter, Portsmouth, Cheltenham, Southampton – that cleverly expands its natural audience base to roughly that of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

Yet the orchestra has also always been canny in its choice of conductors. Charles Groves, Constantin Silvestri, Rudolf Barshai, Andrew Litton, Yakov Kreizberg and most recently

Marin Alsop are among those who have all played their part in honing an outfit that punches above its weight.

And now the baton has passed to the hotly-tipped 34-year-old Ukrainian Kirill Karabits. He was, he tells me over a coffee at the Lighthouse, enraptured by what he found. "I didn't want to come here before I first visited," he explains, "I knew nothing about this orchestra. I thought this was a little place and how good could they be? Then we started and it was astonishing. I felt something I hadn't felt before." That something was a band that, he says, "from the first gesture, goes with you. It's like driving a great car. Where many orchestras take time to do something, here, it's immediate! And it's inspiring me to jump over my limits."

It sounds, judging by the evening concert, a special relationship (a slightly awkward accompaniment to Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto aside, in Britten's *Sinfonia de Requiem* and Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* they are dramatic and characterful, with brass and woodwinds the stars of the show). With a new recording contract for Onyx (see review on page 66), and the odd orchestra/DJ mix night (the so-called Club K which plays to 1000 students) to encourage younger audiences, the portents for this partnership seem good. I won't leave it so long next time. ☺

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1 February Cape Town City Hall
Martin Panteleev conducts the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra in his own *The Island*, Walton's *Johannesburg Overture*, Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, Korngold's Violin Concerto with soloist Philippe Quint, and Saint-Saëns's Organ Symphony with soloist Grant Brasler. Details: +27 21 410 9809 / www.cpo.org.za

4 February Sydney Opera House
Opera Australia stages Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* under conductors Antony Walker and Anthony Legge with Giorgio Caoduro and José Carbo as Figaro, Dominica Matthews as Rosina, and Henry Choo and John Longmuir as Almaviva. Performances take place throughout February and March. Details: +61 2 9318 8200 / www.opera-australia.org.au



The Schubert Ensemble can be heard at Wigmore Hall

7 February London Wigmore Hall
The Schubert Ensemble gives the second in its three-concert Enescu/Dvořák series with Schubert's Notturmo, D897, Enescu's Piano Quartet No 2 and Dvořák's Piano Quartet, Op 87. Details: +44 (0)20 7935 2141 / www.wigmore-hall.org.uk

9 February Lucerne Culture and Convention Centre
Neeme Järvi conducts the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra in Dvořák's *Scherzo capriccioso*, the premiere of Rodion Shchedrin's Cello and Piano Concerto with soloists Mischa Maisky and Martha Argerich, and Shostakovich's Symphony No 9 on February 9 and 10. Details: +41 226 0515 / www.sinfonieorchester.ch

10 February Baltimore Strathmore Music Center
Pianist Yuja Wang joins the Baltimore Symphony conducted

by Juanjo Mena to perform Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto alongside Bruckner's Symphony No 6 on February 10 at Strathmore Music Center, and February 11 and 13 at Meyerhoff Symphony Hall. Details: +1 410 783 8000 / www.bsomusic.org

10 February London Royal Festival Hall
The Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen performs Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, and *Cantata profana* with tenor Attila Fekete, bass Michele Kalmandi and Coro Gulbenkian, plus Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* as part of Salonen's "Infernal Dance: Inside the World of Béla Bartók" series. Details: +44 (0)800 652 6717 / www.philharmonia.co.uk

10 February Lofoten Chamber Music Festival
The Lofoten Chamber Music Festival's winter edition runs from February 10 to 13 with performances from violinists Arvid Engegård and Arve Tellefsen, pianist Christian Ihle Hadland and the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra. Concerts take place on six of the Lofoten Islands. Details: +47 913 98 640 / www.lofotenfestival.com

11 February Oxford Sheldonian Theatre
Paul Lewis performs Schubert's Piano Sonatas Nos 15 and 17, and *Drei Klavierstücke*, D946. Details: +44 (0)1865 244806 / www.musicatoxford.com

13 February Edinburgh Usher Hall
The BBC Scottish Symphony conducted by Donald Runnicles performs Haydn's Symphony No 44, "Trauer", and Brahms's *German Requiem* with soprano Lisa Milne, baritone Markus Brück and the Edinburgh Festival Chorus. Details: +44 (0)131 228 1155 / www.usherhall.co.uk

15 February Milan Teatro alla Scala
La Scala presents Puccini's *Tosca* starring Oksana Dyka and Sondra Radvanovsky in the title-role, Jonas Kaufmann and Marco Berti as Cavaradossi and Zelijo Lucic and Bryn Terfel as Scarpia on February 15, 17, 20, 22, 25, 27 and March 2, 4, 6, 23 and 25. Details: +39 02 860 775 / www.teatroallascala.org

16 February Birmingham Symphony Hall
Andris Nelsons conducts the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in Beethoven's *Prometheus Overture* and Ballet Music, Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* with violinist Jennifer Pike and Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony. Details: +44 (0)121 780 3333 / www.cbso.co.uk

17 February Liverpool Philharmonic Hall
The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by John Wilson performs Walton's *Scapino: A Comedy Overture*, John Ireland's Piano Concerto with soloist John Lenehan and Holst's *The Planets* with the Liverpool Philharmonic Youth Choir. Details: +44 (0)151 709 3789 / www.liverpoolphil.com

17 February London Kings Place
Kings Place presents "Celebrating Percy Grainger" from February 17 to 20 with performances from The Addison Singers, The Royal Artillery Band and The Fitzwilliam String Quartet. Details: +44 (0)20 7520 1490 / www.kingsplace.co.uk



Gautier Capuçon plays Schumann's Cello Concerto in LA

18 February Los Angeles Walt Disney Concert Hall
The LA Philharmonic conducted by Lionel Bringuier perform Dvořák's Symphony No 5 and Schumann's Cello Concerto with soloist Gautier Capuçon on February 18, 19 and 20. Details: +1 323 850 2000 / www.laphil.com

24 February Munich Philharmonie
Kristjan Järvi conducts the Munich Philharmonic in Bernstein's *Candide* with soloists Mark Panuccio, Patricia Petibon and Kim Criswell, and the Munich Philharmonic Choir on February 24, 25 and 27. Details: www.mphil.de

High Fidelity

News and reviews of the latest in audio, home cinema and new technology

Cambridge Audio thinks small, thinks Minx

Cambridge Audio has launched its own contender in the hotly contested style speaker arena, adding to its range the new Minx line-up. Available for purchase in a variety of packages, designed for both 2.1-channel and surround sound, Minx is based around extremely compact speakers – the Min10 satellite speaker is just 8x8x8.5cm – and a choice of three subwoofers, the smallest of which is just 22x21x22cm.

To keep things small while delivering high-quality sound, the main speakers use flat-panel Balanced Mode Radiator drive units, said to deliver a much wider frequency range than other comparably-sized speakers. Other advantages are wider dispersion, giving a much larger “sweet spot” for listening, and better sound pressure levels at distance: the SPL is down just 4dB at 3.5m, whereas conventional drivers would drop 11dB at the same distance.

The subwoofers combine digital amplification, chosen for compact size, high efficiency and cool operation, digital signal processing and auxiliary bass radiators, designed to back up the main drive units

and give powerful bass from small enclosures.

Packages start with the 2.1-channel Minx S212, at £350: this uses a pair of the smallest Min10 satellites and the X200 subwoofer, which has a 200W amplifier built in. The entry-level 5.1-channel package is the £500 Minx S215, which uses five of the Min10s and an X200.

The speakers are available in a choice of black or white lacquer finish and have a range of mounting options, including wall-mounts and table-top or floor stands.

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High-end ONKYO's bring back VU meters

New from Onkyo is a high-end stereo line-up of CD player, pre-amplifier and power amplifier – and, in a nod to the past, the stereo power amplifier has prominent VU meters to show the amount of power being delivered.

The amplification is the £2500 M-5000R, a bridgeable power amp using a new Quad Push-Pull design and twin toroidal transformers, while the partnering pre-amplifier, the £1700 P-3000R, has both analogue inputs and AES/EBU and USB digital inputs.

Completing the system is the £1500 C-7000R CD player, which uses a solid die-cast aluminium disc-tray, separate transformers for analogue and digital sections and a high-precision clock.

Onkyo Europe
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www.onkyo.co.uk

COMING SOON

Musical Fidelity M1 CLiC

The latest company to make a move into the streaming music arena is British manufacturer Musical Fidelity, which will be adding the M1 CLiC model to its range in the first quarter of this year. Priced at around £1200-£1300, the new model is a compact unit combining the functions of pre-amplifier, tuner and network/ internet streamer: it will have both wi-fi and ethernet connectivity built in, USB connections for computers and iPods, and a choice of conventional analogue and digital inputs. In addition, it will offer both fixed- and variable-level audio outputs, enabling it to be used with conventional amplifiers or direct into a power amplifier.

More iPod control

Talking of connectivity, Onkyo is set to become the latest manufacturer to add iPod control of its components when connected to a wireless network. A free app, usable on the iPod Touch and iPhone models, will be made available through the iTunes store, and will give full control over all the functions of the receiver from the handheld device. It will work with the company's current range of network-connected AV receivers and past models with network connectivity.



Michell's turntable SEduction

Available in a limited edition of just 99 units, the Gyro SEduction is the latest version of Michell Engineering's popular Gyro turntable. The new model has a unique “blue steel” finish to all its aluminium parts and comes with a unique matching record clamp and Techno Arm, plus the HR power supply – an upgrade over the standard Gyro SE unit – finished in a black glitter effect. The Gyro SEduction is available now, at £2245.

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EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

The changing face of system connectivity

The latest equipment has a whole range of unfamiliar socketry. **Andrew Everard** attempts to make sense of it all

Once, it was so simple: the turntable connected to a dedicated input on the back of an amplifier, and everything else went into those ubiquitous red and white RCA phono sockets, one for each channel of each input.

These days, however, everything – from amplifiers to micro-systems to tuners and CD players – is sprouting all kinds of unfamiliar sockets of odd shapes and sizes, and offering ever more options for connecting product X to product Y. And while those familiar with the back end of AV receivers may be familiar with some of these new connections – multichannel analogue audio, optical and electrical digital and HDMI inputs, for example – the stereo amplifier sector is also seeing massive changes.

Available on some modern stereo amplifiers, and I suspect set to become more familiar in the near future, is a range of digital inputs, allowing external digital devices to be connected directly. Amplifiers increasingly have onboard digital-to-analogue conversion, to which devices such as computers, digital players and the like can be connected.

And CD players, of course: yes, they have their own conversion built in – and we haven't seen a widespread revival of the old transport-only machines that accompanied the first blooming of standalone DACs a decade or more back – but if you have an older player with a digital output, a modern amp with onboard digital capability could be a worthwhile upgrade.

Many computers now have digital audio outputs, allowing their often fairly woeful built-in analogue stages to be bypassed: even on some laptops you'll find a digital output concealed in the headphone socket, accessible using a mini Toslink optical cable.

However, if there isn't a dedicated digital audio output, some devices now have USB Type B sockets designed to take the audio from computer to amplifier over a simple, inexpensive cable (although inevitably there are also pricey audio-only USB cables coming onto the market).


These sockets are found not only on amplifiers but also on some standalone DACs – and even on a few micro-systems and the odd CD player (such as the Audiolab 8200CD reviewed in the November issue) and network player – and offer extremely simple connectivity with a computer. Once hooked up, the computer “sees” the device as it would a new soundcard, and simply plays music through it – no need for any drivers or software, in most cases.

Talking of networks, as you may have gathered from the products appearing in these pages over the past few months, an increasing range of devices can stream music from a computer or network attached storage (NAS) device, either using wired Ethernet or a Wi-Fi wireless link.

Apart from standalone systems such as the Naim Uniti and UnitiQute, Arcam's Solo Neo and the Marantz M-CR603 reviewed this month, there are dedicated network media players designed to connect into an existing system: we've already tested the Marantz NA7004, there will be a Rotel offering in next month's magazine, and more are on the way.

Finally, there's the iPod, and things have moved on a way from the old 3.5mm stereo to two phono cables and basic iPod docks. The latest generation of products can offer control of the player direct from your remote handset, and some even take the audio from the portable players in digital form, again bypassing the none-too-special circuitry inside the handheld machines.

Some companies offer USB sockets into which the standard Apple white lead can be connected; others offer built-in iPod docks or clever multipin sockets to accept a range of modular adapters. These last connections can be used for iPods, but in some cases also for Bluetooth audio adapters and even Wi-Fi connections.

As I suggested earlier, we're now a very long way from one pair of sockets marked “phono” and a row of identical “line” pairs – but the good news is that today's audio components offer more ways of listening to music than ever before. 



Infidelities Andrew Everard

**Look after your
hi-fi dealer – they're
a dying breed**

The age-old image of the hi-fi enthusiast – alone at home with his system and his cat, only venturing out on a Saturday to indulge in some purchase-free “tyre-kicking” at his local hi-fi shop – is a hard one to shake off. Tell someone you're into surfing or snowboarding or whatever, and you'll seem quite interesting, while hi-fi seems to rank right up there with bus-spotting and railway modelling as interests likely to get you sideways glances.

But an essential part of the hi-fi hobby – the regular visit to a local retailer of similar enthusiasm – is under threat. For, just as high street butchers and bakers have fallen prey to the big supermarkets, so specialist hi-fi dealers are vanishing in favour of out-of-town “sheds” and online sales, and even those remaining are feeling the chill economic wind.

That was brought home to me by some recent correspondence regarding a speaker purchase with which a customer was unhappy: only after a few days of online complaint and many spurious suggestions of solutions from other users did he get the dealer to come out and have a listen. Within minutes, the problem was diagnosed and a solution put in motion. Result? One happy consumer.

Maybe the time is right for a return to real hi-fi buying, just as some are now turning their back on the megasupermarkets and seeking out real greengrocers or bakers or butchers.

Make the most of the expertise out there – otherwise, by the time you really need it, it'll be gone.

Andrew Everard
Audio Editor



**'The time is
right for real
hi-fi buying'**

MARANTZ M-CR603

A compact solution packed with performance

This diminutive system may look simple but its wide-ranging capabilities make it a superb buy, says Andrew Everard



No apologies for the fact I'm featuring another Marantz streaming audio product just a couple of months after reviewing the NA7004 Network Music Player: the company is grabbing the computer-stored music concept with both hands and its range has no shortage of intriguing products.

Apart from the network "tuner" I looked at in the December 2010 issue, there are network-capable AV receivers, able to stream internet radio stations as well as music stored on home computers and networks, and the excellent little system we have here, an all-in-one CD/internet receiver, to which the buyer needs add nothing more than a pair of speakers.

The M-CR603 is a development of the rather impressive M-CR502, launched by Marantz into the highly competitive

micro-systems market back in the summer of 2009. From that CD receiver, the range has expanded into what Marantz now calls its "Melody" range: there's an updated M-CR503, otherwise known as the "Melody Music", a multichannel version complete with built-in Blu-ray player, the M-ER803 "Melody Movie", and the system we have here, the "Melody Media".

All three share a slick style and an overall impression of quality, from the fit and finish of the panels to the operation of the controls. Fascias are simple, the units neat and compact, and clever touches abound, such as the extension of the casework gloss-finished lid to hide the connections to the rear of the unit.

That's not new – it reminds me of Quad's system components of recent years, which have a similar top-plate overhang for the same purpose – but it's indicative

THE TEST MUSIC



SCHUBERT

Winterreise
Peter Harvey bar Gary Cooper *fp*
Linn CKD371

This simple but beautifully crafted Linn recording, on SACD or download, sounds breathtaking on a fine system.

of the attention to detail here. This is proper hi-fi made home-friendly, designed for those who want serious performance without the clutter of conventional hi-fi separates.

In fact, the M-CR603 is styled like a miniature version of the company's Reference Series products, and that means the look and feel is rather more expensive than its £500 price-tag might suggest. Take into account the range of facilities available here, and that price begins to look even more of a bargain.

Not only does it have the usual CD playback, DAB/DAB+/FM/AM tuner and a 2x60W output, it also allows digital connection and control of an iPod via the front-panel USB socket. That removes the digital-to-analogue conversion duties from the circuitry within the portable Apple players.

It also has network capability via an Ethernet port on the rear: plugged into your home network, it will stream thousands of internet radio stations, allow you to access streaming services such as Napster or even access music stored on your home computer or network storage.

Furthermore, with the addition of a £40 upgrade – not quite ready at the time of writing this review but expected by the time you read it – the Marantz will also act as an AirPlay client for iPods, iPhones, iPads and computers running Apple's iTunes 10. This enables it to act as a networked speaker system for the Apple device, which

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can stream music to the system over a home network.

You can also add a Bluetooth audio receiver module via the rear-panel M-Xport, allowing you to stream music from the likes of mobile phones and computers, and the system will also play music from USB memory devices via the socket on the front panel.

PERFORMANCE

As with the NA7004, the M-CR603 has no wireless network capability, so will either have to be used with a wireless adapter at a cost of perhaps £40 or so extra, or connected directly to a wired network using its Ethernet connection.

As I've mentioned before, I tend to favour a wired connection for music these days, for reasons of stability rather than sound quality, so for me this limitation is no hardship. However, if you only have a wireless home network, you will have to factor in that extra cost.

That aside, the M-CR603 is simple to set up and use, thanks to logical menus and a helpful instruction book, and I soon had it tuned in to radio stations both terrestrial and online – though for the former a good outdoor aerial will prove advantageous – and streaming music from a range of server devices on my network, including my usual NAS drives, a couple of laptops and Naim's UnitiServe ripper/server.

What soon became clear is that, as well as being remarkable value for money, this system deserves to be used with pretty good speakers. Having tried it with several of the usual suspects in the £150-£300 arena, I finally settled on the PMC GB1 speakers (normally used on the rear channels of my surround system) for most of the testing.

That's a pair of speakers selling for over £1500, yet the Marantz system proved more than capable of both driving them and making them sound rather special. A

brief listen to the system with the smaller DB1s suggested these would also be a suitable pairing, and represent a useful saving, but it's a tribute to the capabilities of the little Marantz system that it's far from outclassed by speakers this good.

The presentation here is consistently fast, well-weighted and very open and detailed – in fact, very identifiably Marantz. The sound is above all extremely musical – one of those terms certain to get the "measurements are all" brigade wrinkling their noses, but here I use it to mean that the system gets out of the way of the music, allowing you to listen to the performance.

True, it's revealing of low bit-rate content, be it internet streamed, on the home network or fed in via an iPod, but that's to do with encoding limitations, not those of the system. With better content, however, this system can sound quite magnificent.

Combine that with a specification so comprehensive as to make most of the immediate competition look old-fashioned, and you have a stylish, compact system that's remarkable value for money, not to mention being extremely enjoyable to use. 🎧

MARANTZ M-CR603

Type Network music system

Price £500

Inputs USB, 3 analogue, optical digital

Outputs Speakers, one analogue, subwoofer, headphones

Other connections Ethernet

Disc compatibility CD, CD-R/RW, MP3, WMA

File types via network MP3, WMA, AAC, WAV, FLAC, Real Audio

Tuner DAB/DAB+/FM RDS, 99 presets, plus internet radio

Output 60W per channel

Accessories supplied Remote handset, DAB aerial

Dimensions (WxHxD) 28x30.2x11.1cm

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Distributed by D&M Audiovisual Ltd, 4-10 Donegall Square East, Belfast, Northern Ireland BT1 5HD

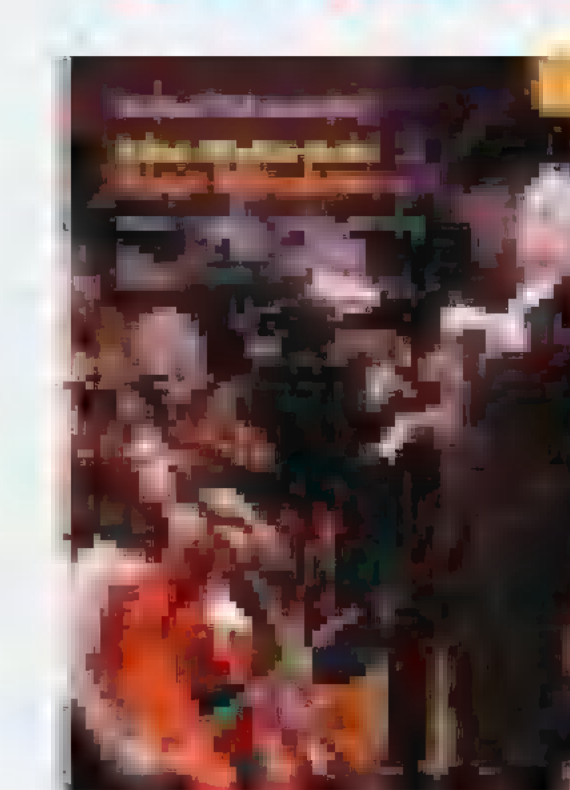
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A closer look at, and listen to, some recent high-definition recordings

'EUROPA KONZERT 2010'



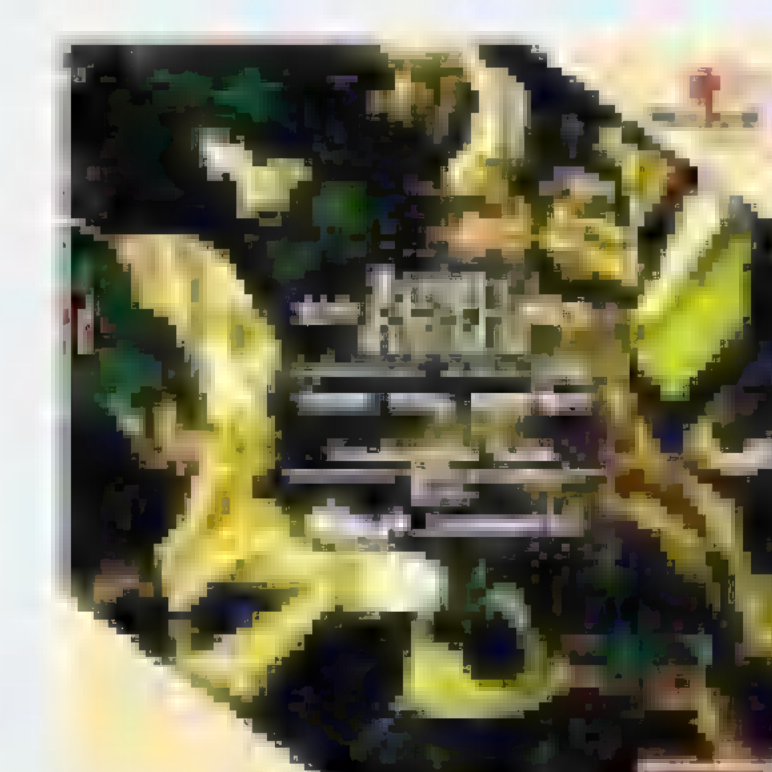
Wagner *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* – Prelude, Act 3 **Elgar** Cello Concerto

Brahms *Symphony No 1* Weilerstein; Berlin

Philharmonic Orchestra / Barenboim
EuroArts © 205 8064

This surprisingly intimate recording, made in Oxford's Sheldonian Theatre, carries on a 20-year tradition of May Day concerts in Europe's historic cities. Fine performances and a beautiful location are served well by excellent 1080p video and PCM stereo or 5.1-channel DTS-HD Master Audio sound.

The picture is razor-sharp, while the sound makes just the subtlest use of surround while keeping clear focus on both orchestra and soloist. This is a glorious disc; a perfect antidote to the winter blues.



BRAHMS

Ein deutsches Requiem

Tilling, Roth; Berlin Radio Choir and Orchestra / Janowski

Pentatone © PTC5186 361

The Polyhymnia engineers are masters of multichannel DSD recording and the Pentatone label rarely disappoints when it comes to spectacular-sounding discs. This recording is right up there with the best SACD demonstration titles, with a delightfully immersive sound combining warmth and smoothness with real power.

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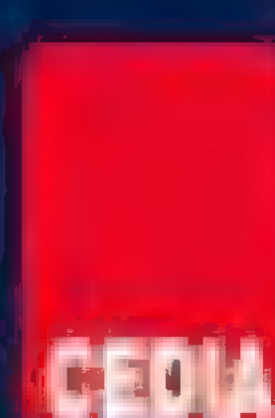
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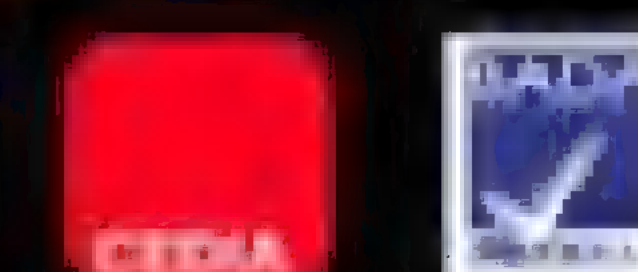
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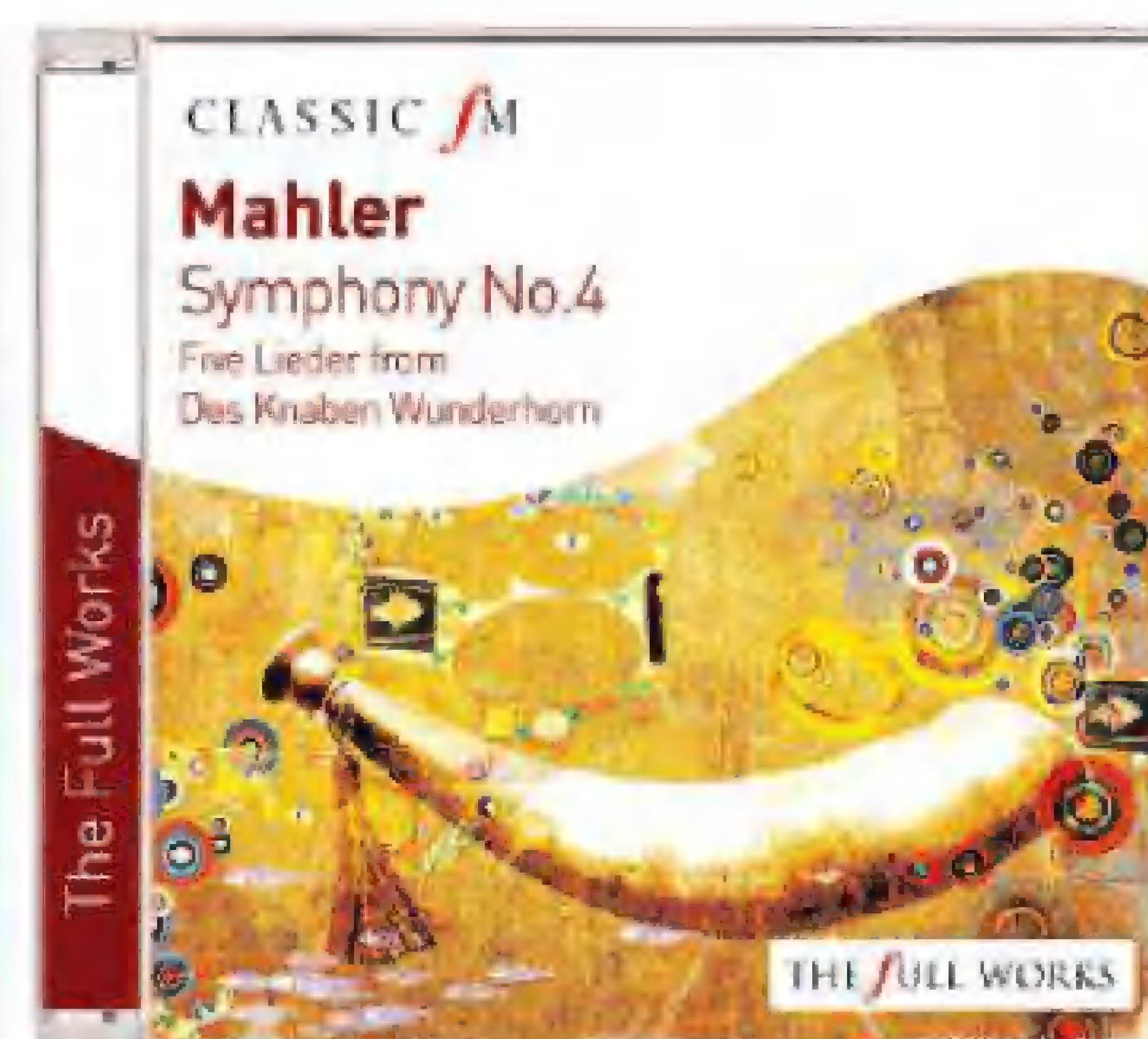
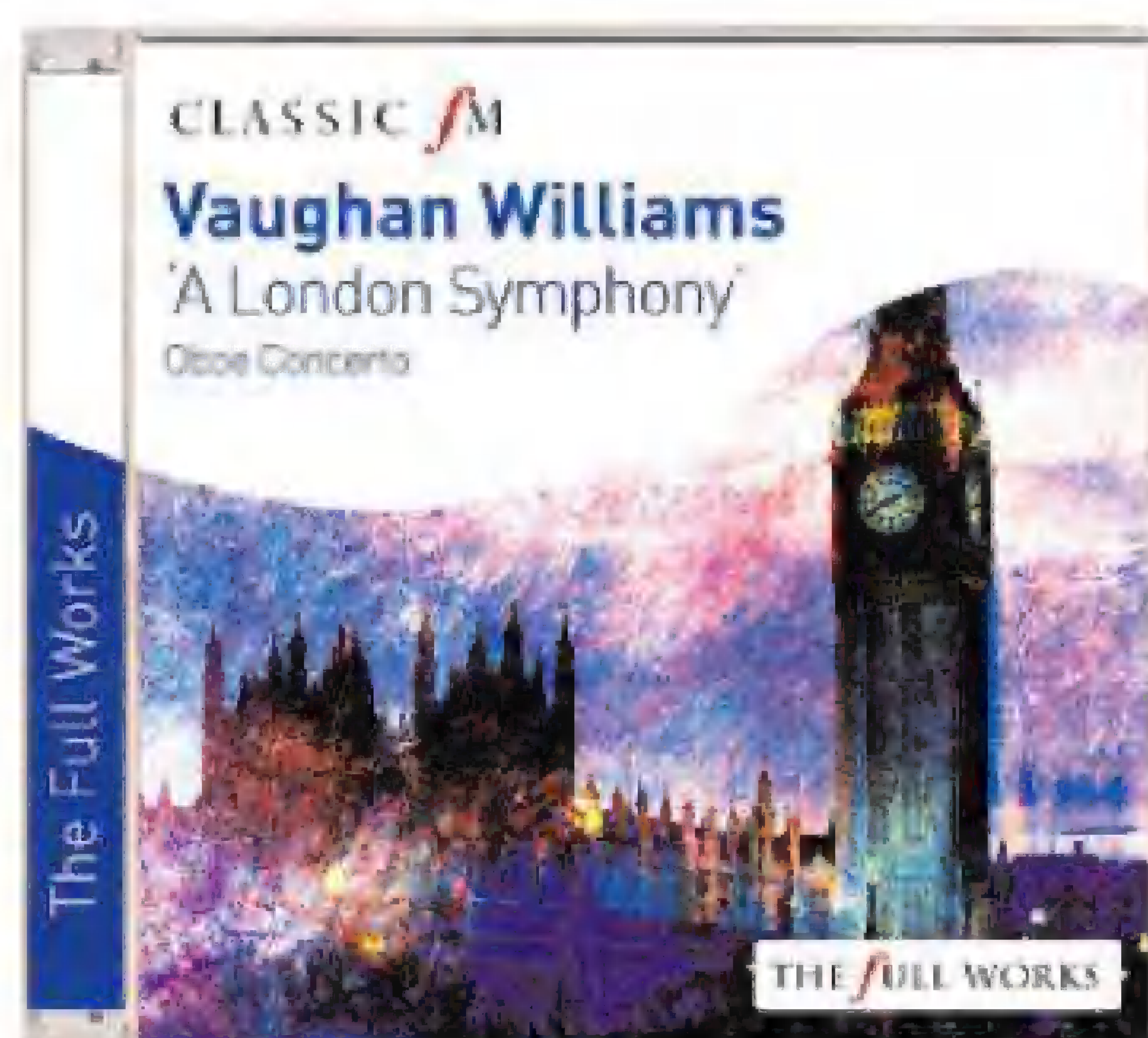
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TANNOY MERCURY V1

Entry-level speakers have both speed and substance

The first of Tannoy's new budget range sounds anything but small and inexpensive, says **James Vesey**

For as long as most can remember, British loudspeaker companies have produced small, sensibly priced entry-level models with performance way beyond expectations. Some designs were truly special: a colleague used to delight in surprising visitors with a pair of little Mission 760 speakers on the end of a playback system with a price-tag well into five figures.

Most of the best-known British mass-market speaker brands are now owned beyond our shores, or have their speakers made in lower-cost countries, but competition goes on: almost all of those brands have contenders in the sub-£200 sector.

The latest Tannoy Mercury speakers are a case in point: the Mercury V line-up is, not surprisingly, the fifth generation of this celebrated range, and the £150/pr V1 its new entry-level model. And initial impressions are that this is a lot of speaker for the money.

The new Mercury models may be larger than the last line-up but the V1 is a compact design, just 30cm tall and finished in a choice

of sugar maple or dark walnut effects. The cabinet is built from 15mm particleboard with substantial internal bracing, the baffle is 18mm MDF with brushed aluminium trim, and a pair of threaded fixings on the rear panel allows the speaker to be attached to third-party wall-brackets if you don't want to use stands.

New drive units have been developed for the speakers: the tweeter is a 25mm soft-dome type, Tannoy saying it has been "engineered to tolerances generally found on much more costly loudspeaker designs", while the 13cm mid/bass unit uses an ultra-light coated paper cone the company describes as "the fastest yet to grace a Mercury loudspeaker".

Close-to-wall working is aided by a front-venting port, the speakers use a crossover in which the HF capacitors are mounted using Tannoy's Differential Materials Technology damping, and the internal wiring is silver-plated oxygen-free copper – highly unusual at this level of the market.

PERFORMANCE

This is the easy bit: these are cracking little speakers for the money. They're flexible when it comes to positioning, easy to drive thanks to 88dB/W/m sensitivity and 8 ohm nominal impedance, and perfectly suited to budget amplifiers, while at the same time hinting at greatness when you up the stakes. I tried them out both in free space and up against a solid wall, and while the latter position does bring a little extra bass weight – without adding boom, I may add – these speakers sound solid and authoritative, yet with excellent speed, wherever you place them.

Don't, however, confuse "fast" with "bright": open and explicit these speakers may be, with



excellent handling of complex rhythms from small ensembles to full-scale orchestral works, but there's nothing hard-edged about them. In fact, the treble here has the kind of sweetness and refinement I'd expect from a much more expensive design, combining with that weighty, tight bass and pleasant midband to create a sound that's an absolute pleasure.

While the price-point might suggest these are the ideal speakers for use with affordable micro-component systems such as Denon's D-M38DAB – which they are, by the way – they also sounded rather special on the end of the excellent Yamaha A-S500 amplifier AE tested last month. They work well with electronics of modest output and really thrive when more power is delivered.

Indeed, combine the little Tannoys with that Yamaha amplifier and a reasonable source component, be it for CD, LP or even streamed music, and you could have a highly convincing system for a very sensible outlay. That close competition in the budget speaker market is clearly continuing to pay dividends! **G**

TANNOY MERCURY V1

Type Standmount loudspeakers

Price £150/pr

Drive units 25mm damped polyester dome tweeter, 13cm coated paper cone mid/bass

Frequency response (-6dB) 45Hz-25kHz

Sensitivity 88dB/W/m

Impedance 8 ohm

Recommended amplifier power 10-70W

Enclosure type Front-ported reflex

Finishes Sugar maple, dark walnut

Dimensions (HxWxD) 30x17x25.5cm

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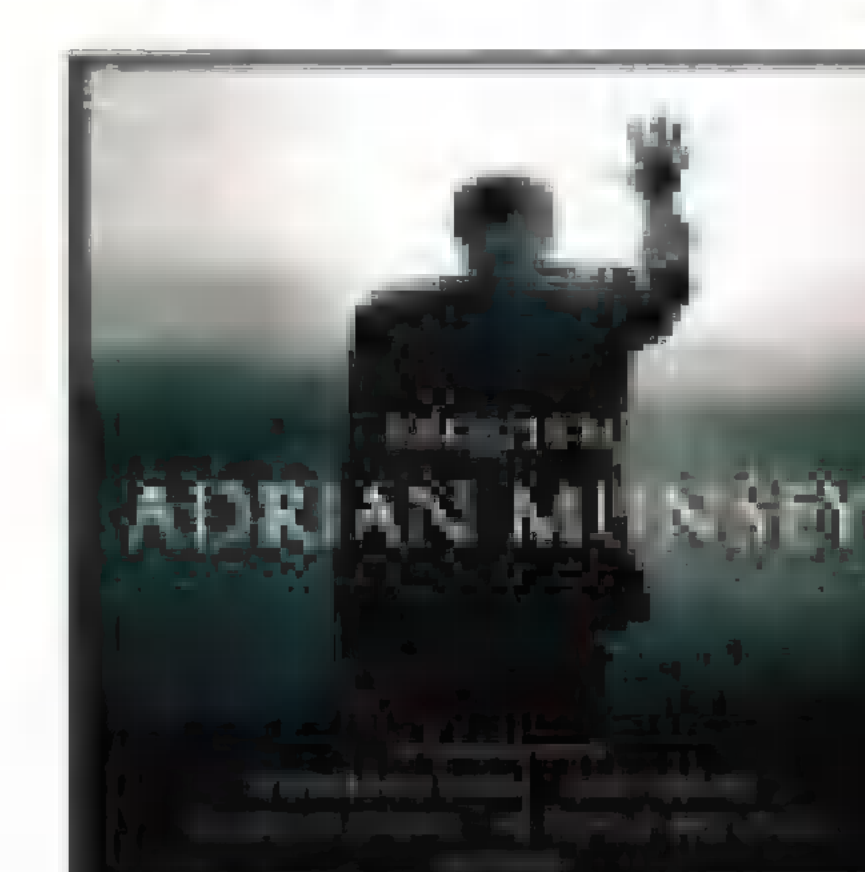
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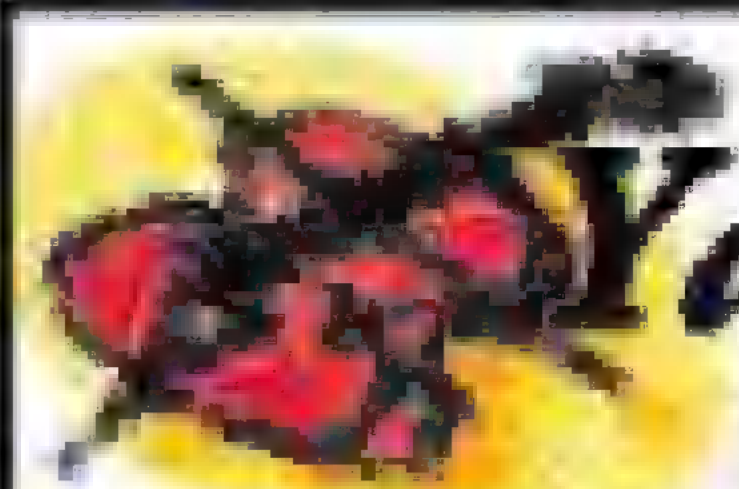
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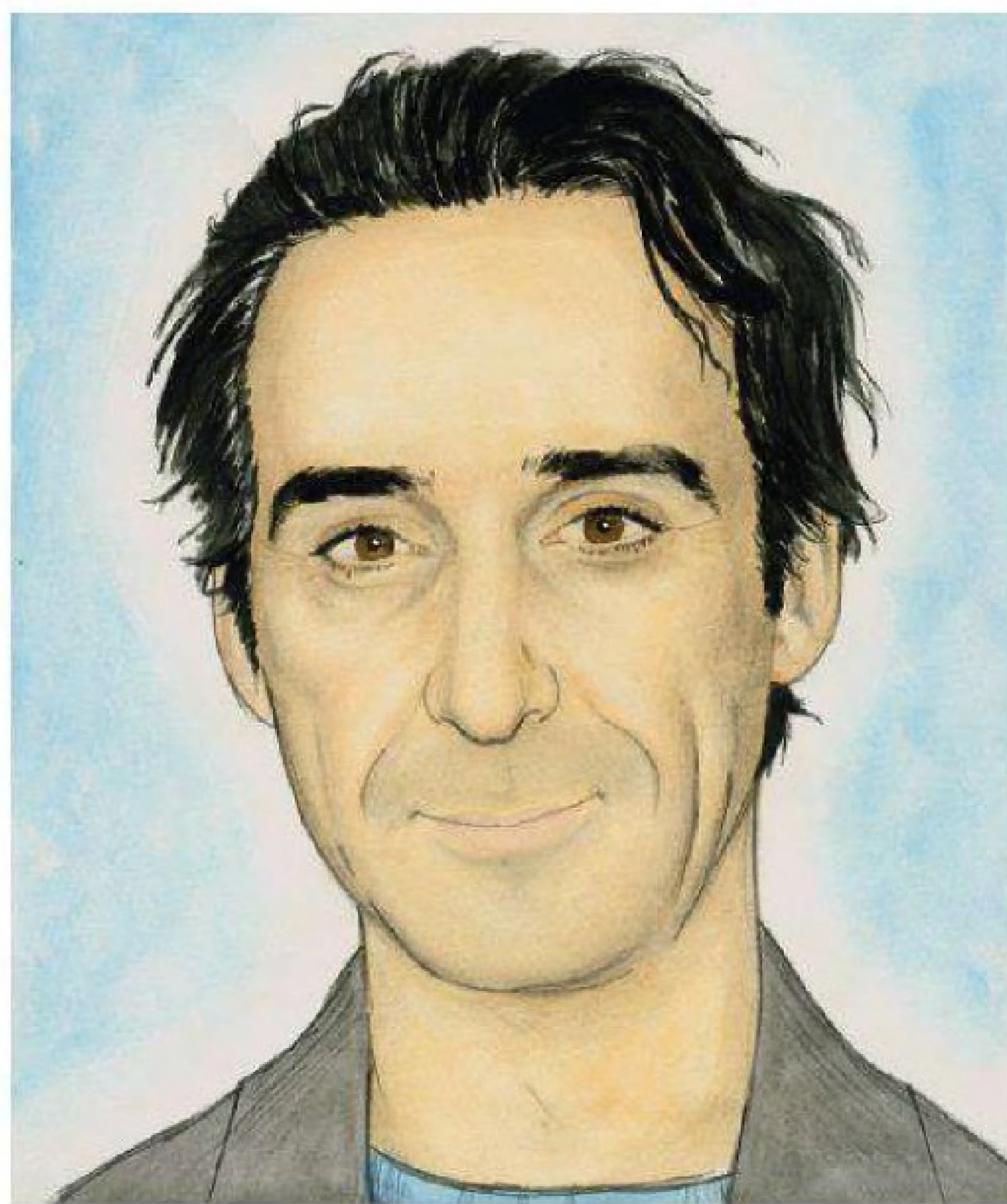
French composer of more than 100 film scores and triple Academy Award nominee
Alexandre Desplat on finding the balance between fiction and function

I always dreamt of being a composer and, more specifically, a film composer.

I was less interested in writing contemporary concert music but instead wanted to combine my joint passions for cinema and music. I started my musical education as a flautist and although the flute is a wonderful instrument, I began to feel limited, so started to play a number of different instruments while fantasising about having an orchestra of my own.

The great thing about film music is that it encompasses such a wide range of cultures and styles, and by gathering this palette of colours and expressions you begin to find your own musical voice. Thus, between the ages of 13 and 20, I would listen to everything I could, day and night. I was dripping in music – from jazz to bossa nova, to Ravel, Debussy, Shostakovich, Messiaen and Boulez. Every kind of music was rich and different and exciting. In this way I started to discover a musical vocabulary of my own.

Young people often ask me how they can become a film composer but they must understand that film music ultimately serves the movie. This means that you must be interested in cinema and prepared to meet directors and editors – to speak less about the music and more about the actors and photography. So this is what I did. I began by writing a lot of music for the stage and one of the actors in a Shakespeare production of mine had directed a short film, so he asked me to compose the music for this. More short movies



‘It drives me crazy when I hear a bad film score. At its best, it is real music’

followed and eventually my first feature. It was a long process but a satisfying one.

I have had the opportunity to work with some fantastic directors throughout my career. The best directors, such as Stephen Frears and Roman Polanski, understand that cinema is a collaborative art and is therefore something you have to share. The biggest test is

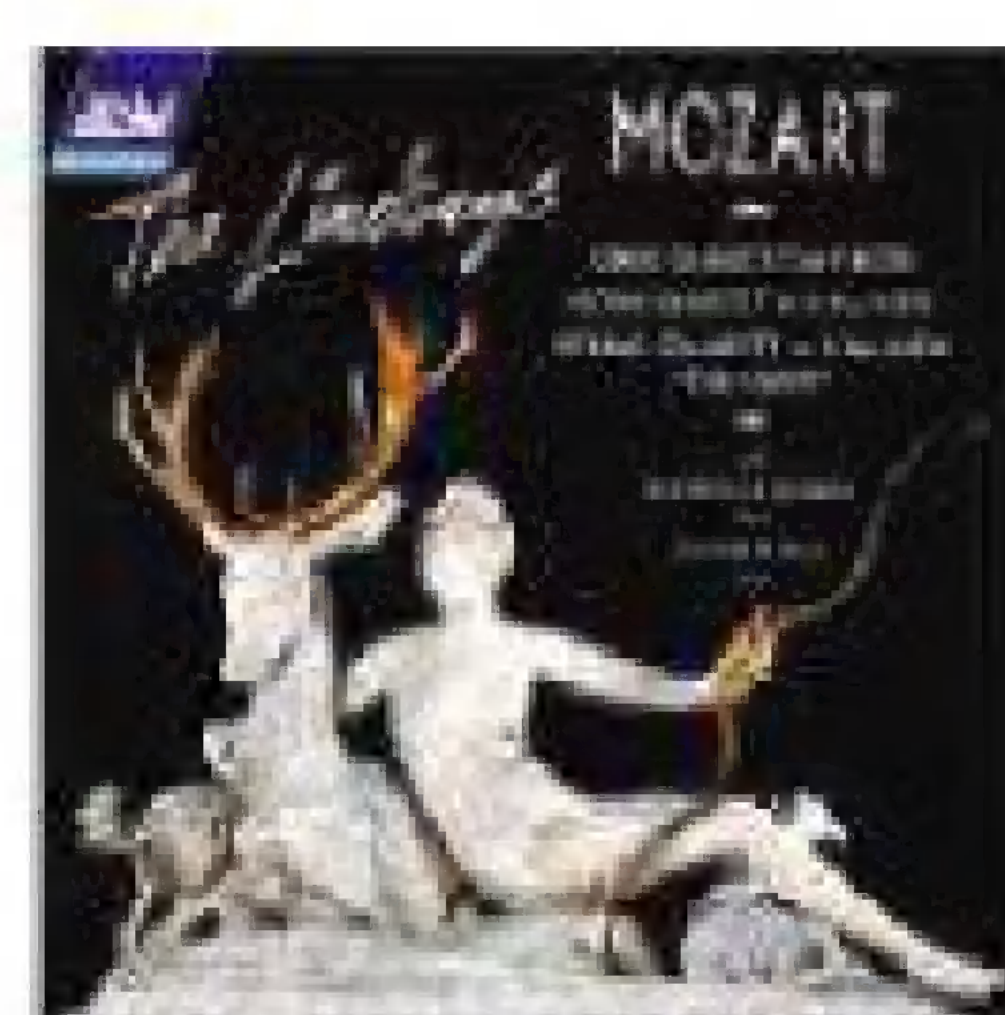
to challenge directors, because they want you to surprise them, to open windows and gates they have never considered for their film.

Most important is finding the balance between function and fiction. Function will ensure that the music fits well into the mechanics of the film but fiction enables you to tap into the invisible – the deep psychology,

pain and notions of the characters. It has a very special strength but only works when balanced equally with function, because the music cannot be detached from the story.

No matter which film you are dealing with – large or small – the process is fundamentally the same. I recently wrote soundtracks for the latest *Harry Potter* and for *The King’s Speech*, and the main difference between these was the amount of music required – over two hours for *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 1*, and less than an hour for *The King’s Speech*. Obviously *Harry Potter* comes from a lengthy franchise, with music originally written by John Williams, so you are part of a piece of cinema history. But in the end it comes down to you, locked away in a studio, scratching your head and trying to come up with ideas quickly because the director will be there in an hour.

Music for film can often be overlooked by the classical community and for this reason it drives me crazy when I hear a bad score at the cinema. There will always be someone who says, “See, I was right. Movie music is bad!” At their best, film scores – like the kinds I listened to in my teens by Herrmann, Waxman and Steiner – are real music, not background wallpaper, and can work equally well in a concert hall. Of course, we film composers must be humble, because our art is part of a larger process, but although I hear a lot of wallpaper, I always strive to write real music as much as I can. ©



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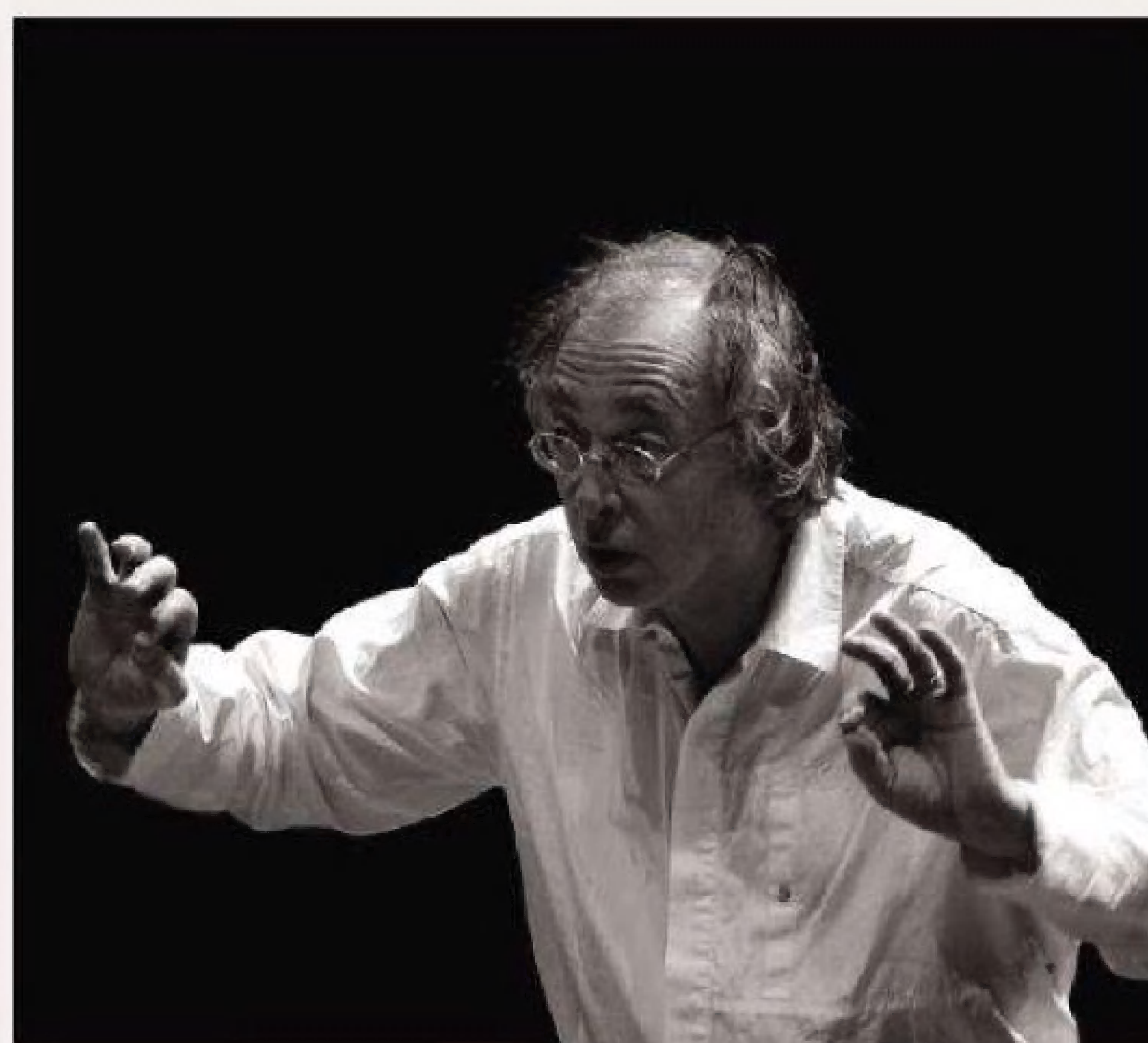
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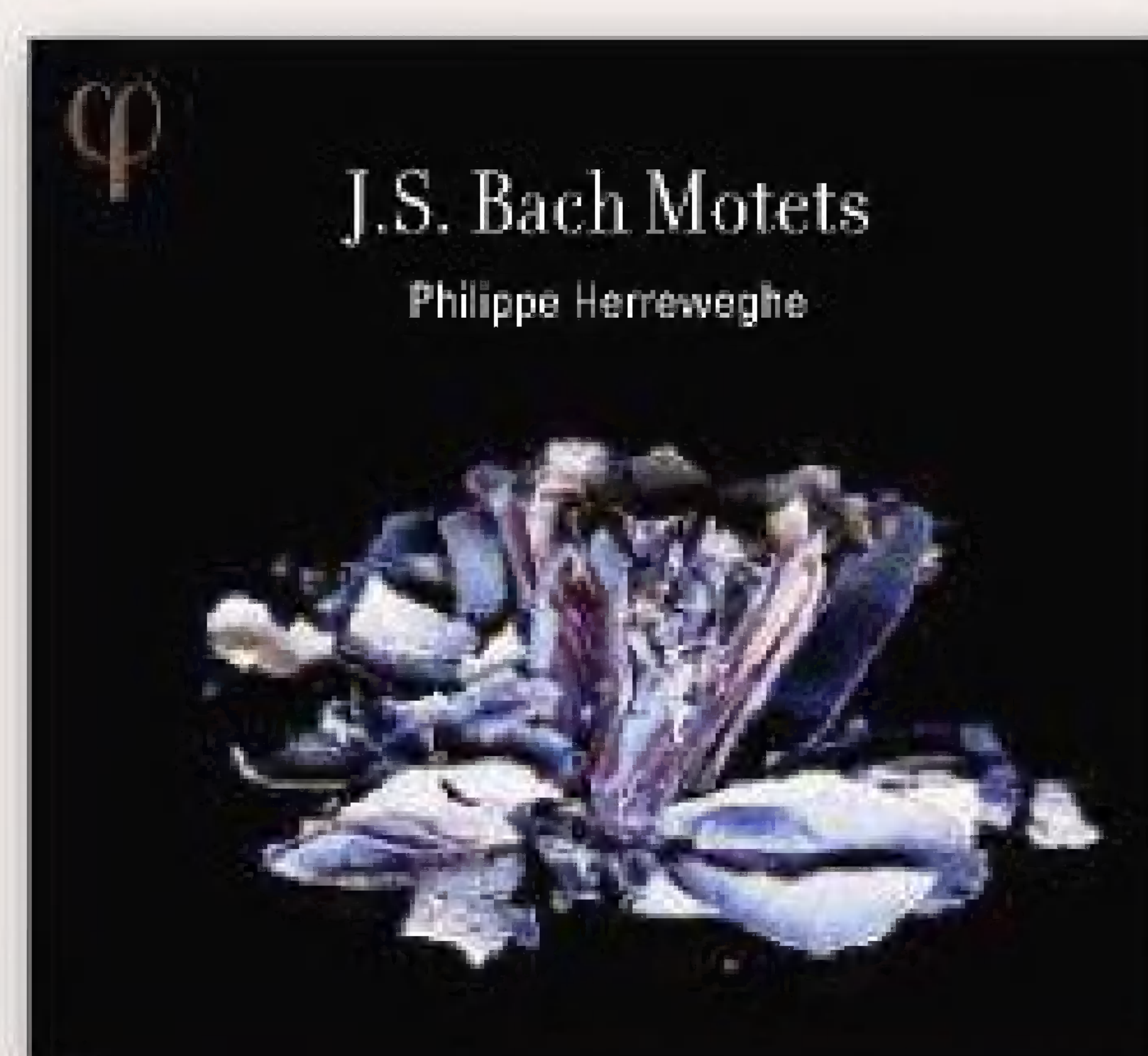
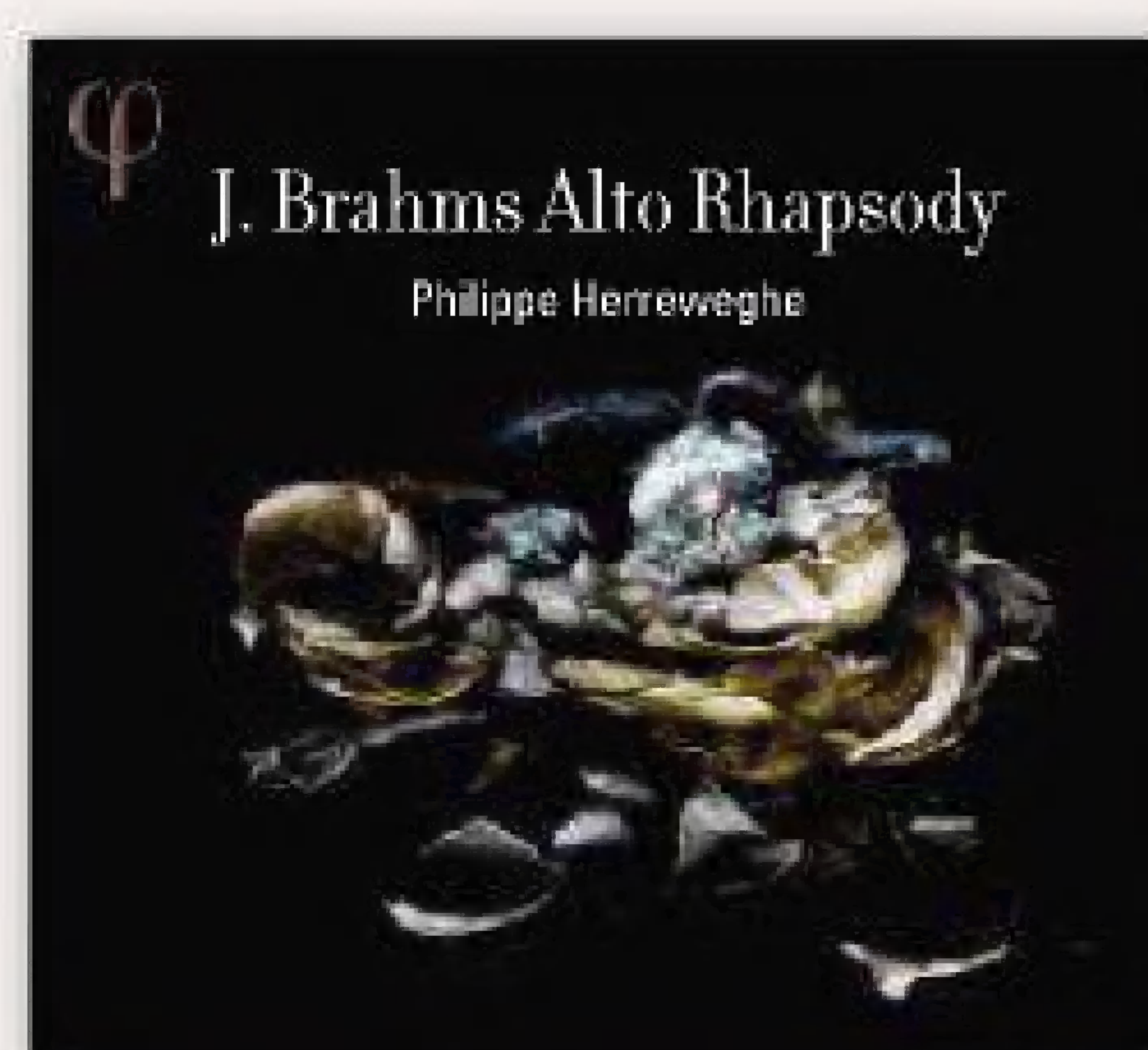
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